

THE NATIONAL GARDENER



Winter 2025
gardenclub.org



The National Gardener

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GO GREEN - PLANT AMERICA



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ABOUT US

National Garden Clubs, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) organization that aims to promote the love of gardening, floral design, and civic and environmental responsibility. We help coordinate the interests and activities of state and local garden clubs in the U.S. and abroad.

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Page 2 • Romolo Tavani

Page 4 *Columbine* • Klickblich, *Spotlight* • Marigold_88

Write for TNG:

We welcome ALL NGC members, garden writers, designers and outdoor enthusiasts to share their club, community or personal story. You do NOT have to be a professional author to submit an article. See [The National Gardener page](#) for submission information.

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- Spring Issue Mar. 1/Apr. 1
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- Quarter Page \$175

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5. Be likely to deceive any person.
6. Promote any illegal activity, or advocate, promote or assist any unlawful act.
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BRENDA'S JOURNAL

The end of the year is always a good time to reflect on our spiritual progress. Whether you set goals at the beginning of this year or not, it is certainly good to ask where you have been this year and whether you are heading in the right direction. Christopher Perry.

The beginning of the New Year is when we make resolutions and plans for the year to come. Instead, I am asking us to look back to 2024 and celebrate what we have accomplished as individuals and as members of National Garden Clubs.

- * The Executive Committee continued to meet for its winter meetings via Zoom.
- * NGC hosted Environmental School Course 2 via Zoom with 57 attendees and Course 3 with 35 attendees. Course 4 is on March 4 and 5, 2025.
- * The NGC Convention at Westminster, Colorado, was shortened by one day, thus trying to make it more affordable for members and NGC.
- * We have certified 457 pollinator gardens and 189 wildlife landscapes.
- * We have donated over 101,345 pounds of produce to food banks and those in need!
- * We held the first hybrid Fall Board Meeting, and over 180 NGC Board members attended.
- * We dedicated the "Pathway of Success" at Headquarters. This brick walkway incorporates state and region engraved pavers along with members' and clubs' engraved bricks.
- * We held webinars on pollinator gardens, landscaping for wildlife, the Dark Skies Program - which helps to eliminate light pollution, and "Merry and Green" - creating holiday designs using sustainable materials.
- * We re-established Membership Monday Zoom meetings on the first Monday of each month.
- * National Garden Clubs has reversed its trend of losing members. This year, NGC gained over 3500 members! Congratulations, and pat yourselves on the back!

I encourage you to look at what you have accomplished as individual garden club members and as clubs. Here are some of my personal undertakings.

- * I am proud that I carry around my reusable water bottle instead of using plastic bottles.
- * I have finally achieved the 5-star status within NGC, which has been a long-time goal.
- * I enjoyed visiting and speaking in the following states/ events this year: Tennessee for the Deep South Convention and the Tennessee Convention, Minnesota Convention via Zoom, Florida Convention, Georgia Convention, Arkansas State Meeting and South Central Region Meeting, Oregon Convention via Zoom, Wyoming Convention, Montana Convention, Alaska Convention and the Pacific Region Convention, Illinois for Central Region Meeting, and Providence, RI for the New England Region Meeting. I also spoke to Highland Park, Pittsburgh, PA Garden Club and visited Judy's Garden Club in Sutton, WV.
- * Finally, my husband Ron and I made a huge move towards lessening our carbon footprint. Our large house and our property were becoming a burden. We sold our West Virginia home and moved to Glenshaw, PA, near Pittsburgh. The new house is half the size of our past home and about 1/3 of the property. We are now closer to our children and grandchildren. This move has caused us to downsize our possessions, too.

No matter what your accomplishments were this year, celebrate them, and look forward to accomplishing even more in 2025.

Happy Gardening!
Brenda

BARK - A WARM GLOW FOR THE WINTER GARDEN

Bruce Crawford

As the chill of winter descends, many gardeners turn their attention indoors to houseplants and the endless stream of catalogs appearing at their doorstep. Outside, attention in the garden focuses on evergreens of varying sizes and the silhouettes of winter-bare deciduous shrubs. However, one can transform those winter bare shrubs into splashes of welcome cheer with glowing red, orange, or yellow stems set against those stalwart evergreens. It simply requires a little focused consideration and planning!

Shrubs with colorful bark are rarely a consideration during our annual excursions to garden centers since the stems hide beneath the foliage. In addition, the stems are usually green or tan from late spring through fall. They transition into their colorful winter wardrobes only after leaf drop when the stems become exposed to sunlight. Although the exact pigment varies by species, over 240 different forms of anthocyanins are responsible for nature's colorful rendition of sunblock! Just as anthocyanins in blueberries benefit human health, they also benefit plant health by reducing the impact of ultraviolet light. This phenomenon is even evident with the youngest growth of red maples (*Acer rubrum*), which becomes a more noticeable red following leaf drop.

For the red-stemmed dogwood and willow species mentioned below, the bark from the past three years of growth displays the showy bright red or orange winter highlights. As the stems age further, the thinner and youthful bark transitions into a corky dark brown or gray bark that shields the cambium layers beneath from sunlight. Hence, it is essential to rejuvenate these plants every three years, in early spring, by cutting the stems back to 3-6" or by annually pruning 1/3 of the oldest canes back to 3-6". This pruning results in a flush of new stems to sustain colorful winter interest!

The best-known shrub for red stems is our native *Cornus sericea* or red twig dogwood. Hardy in zones 3-7, the shrub is stoloniferous and slowly spreads to form sizable colonies over time. Native throughout much of the northern reaches of North America, the foliage is deep green in summer, turning to a deep burgundy in October. The fragrant spring flowers take the form of flat-topped cymes measuring 2 ½-3" across that transition to white fruits in fall – a much-beloved treat for birds! The young stems develop into a deep winter red with cultivars such as 'Arctic Fire' turning a fiery orange-red as seen on this page. If you prefer golden yellow stems for your winter accent, consider 'Flaviramia' or 'Buds Yellow' selections!

(Continued on page 6)



Cornus sericea 'Arctic Fire' • Bruce Crawford



L-R: *Cornus sanguinea* 'Midwinter Fire' - *Itea virginica* 'Henry's Garnet' - *Salix alba* 'Britzensis' • Bruce Crawford

Very similar to red twig dogwood is *Cornus sanguinea* or bloodtwig dogwood. A native of northern Europe and northwestern Asia, the youngest stems transition to a winter red. However, cultivars such as 'Midwinter Fire' (above left) or 'Winter Flame' display more colorful stems. The flowers are also white but are unpleasantly fragrant. The plant's dark blue fruits are less showy than their American cousins.

The stems of both dogwoods typically grow 2-4' tall in a season and, after three years, are close to 5-6' in height. If you prefer a plant that makes a more substantial annual statement, consider the willows such as *Salix alba* var. *vitellina* 'Britzensis.' Readily reaching 6-8' tall in a season, the difference in growth is because both dogwoods mature to 10-15' tall shrubs while the willow can become a 20'+ tall tree if left unpruned. Not to worry, I grew 'Britzensis' for 12 years, and with an annual pruning to 6-8" tall, the plant remained an attractive 6' tall shrub with a modest root run in a mixed border - above right. The plant is a rather unremarkable green shrub from spring through fall, displaying the 2-4" long, lanceolate foliage typical to willows. Come leaf drop, the stems of 'Britzensis' become a striking orange-red that literally lights up the landscape! The selection named 'Swizzle Stick' has similarly colored stems that grow upward in a corkscrew fashion. A native to Europe along with parts of Asia and northern Africa, the plants are hardy in zones 3-8. The cold hardiness of the willows and dogwoods also makes them great candidates for decorating large winter containers, then they can be planted in the garden for years of color to come!

Rarely considered for its red winter stems is Virginia sweetspire (*Itea virginica*). Native from New Jersey south to Florida and west to Indiana and Texas, it is known mainly for its fragrant, 4-6" long racemes of hanging white flowers in June, followed by spectacular deep red fall color. What is overlooked by many is the deep red winter color of the stems, as seen above center. Interestingly, the color develops only on the side facing the sun, while the other side remains green! Requiring little pruning, it prospers best in sun to light shade and is hardy in zones 5-9. Of the numerous selections available, I have had great success in northern regions with 'Henry's Garnet.' Henry refers to Mary G. Henry, Founder of the Henry Foundation for Botanical Research. She found the plant near Sharpsburg, Georgia, in November of 1954 and was struck by the stunning fall color that persisted well into winter. The Arnold Arboretum distributed the plant in 1980 as an unnamed plant division. It was officially named in 1984 by Judy Zuk. At the time, Judy was the Director of the Scott Arboretum of Swarthmore College and was admiring a specimen at the arboretum. Rightfully believing it to be worthy of cultivar status, she combined Mary's last name with the official college color, garnet, and the name was born!

Without question, evergreens have a rightful place in the winter landscape and often provide the "bones" of the garden. However, colorful red, orange, and yellow stems add that warm glow to our winter landscapes that help us endure those long, cold days of winter ahead!

Bruce Crawford, of New Jersey, is the Manager of Horticulture, Morris County Parks Commission, Morris Township, NJ.



The Countryside In Its Splendor • Cecilia Candiotti

Cecilia Candiotti

Cecilia joined a garden club in 1996, where she discovered her passion for floral design and garden clubs' positive impact on our communities. Cecilia served as club president and is also a permanent member of her club's council. She has many credentials, including a 4-Star Membership, Life Judge, Master Environmental Consultant, Horticulture Consultant, and Landscape Design Consultant. She is President-elect of Peru's Judges Council for 2025-2026. From 2021-2023, the International Affiliates Activities Committee invited Cecilia to give presentations. These included *Designing with Manipulated Plant Material*, *Designing with Midolino*, and *Designing with Acrylic*. Cecilia also shares her talent by presenting programs for local clubs. She participated in flower shows associated with the International Affiliate Convention in Tampico Tamaulipas, Mexico. The Garden Club of Guatemala invited Cecilia and two other designers from Peru to demonstrate flower arranging. Judges award Cecilia many honors for her exhibits nationally and internationally. The *Vision of Beauty* calendar committee members chose her artistic designs for publication on multiple occasions. NGC is honored that she is as an International Affiliate.

Florence Leysene

Florence first became interested in floral design while living in Japan. She studied Ikebana in the Sogetsu School style. When she moved to the United States, Florence became a flower arranger for a local florist. Then, a friend kept pushing her to join a garden club because she thought Florence would be an asset to the garden club. The friend was right! Florence has been a member of her local club for 25 years, chairing many different committees and serving as president of her club.

Florence participated at the state level with the Garden Clubs of New Jersey and serves as New Jersey Judges Council Chair. For National Garden Clubs, Florence served on the Vision of Beauty (VOB) calendar committee for four years and was the chair and vice-chair. Florence is an NGC Accredited Master Flower Show Judge. In 2022, NGC President Mary Warshauer asked Florence to make a floral design for the cover of the VOB Calendar. Florence is a very talented designer. Fortunately, she shares her talent by entering images of her design for selection in the Vision of Beauty calendar.

Nancy Voyles of Arkansas, *Vision of Beauty* calendar committee chair, submitted this article on two *VOB* floral designers.



Up, Down, and Around • Florence Leysene

NEW YEAR GREETINGS FROM NGC!

- ★ **President Brenda:** *In 2025, may your garden be full of hope, with seeds that sprout and plants that bloom.*
- ★ **President-elect Donna:** *I wish you all the best of time spent with family and friends during the holidays and much happiness, joy, and prosperity in the New Year!*
- ★ **2nd Vice President Gerianne:** *May all your journeys be filled with wonder, delight, and joy.*
- ★ **3rd Vice President & New England Region Director Susan:** *May you have a greener New Year filled with sustainable choices to enhance our gardens and protect our planet.*
- ★ **Recording Secretary & Central Atlantic Region Director Monica:** *As we begin another year, I'm looking forward to learning and experiencing new things with family and friends, as well as with new friends I meet along the way.*
- ★ **Treasurer Lynette:** *Here's to a year of health, happiness, and great gardening!*
- ★ **Corresponding Secretary Bud:** *I wish everyone a fantastic PLANT AMERICA type 2025 with all the bells and whistles that go along with being in a garden club.*
- ★ **Historian Susan:** *This new year it is my hope that you will always be thinking outside ... no box required.*
- ★ **Parliamentarian Greg:** *May your bylaws guide you through orderly and congenial meetings throughout the new year.*
- ★ **PH & E Director Mary:** *Your dedication to our gardening organization is greatly appreciated. Thank you for your continued support and hard work.*
- ★ **Central Region Director Lynne:** *We hope everyone has a wonderful New Year with family and friends· let's find a way to get someone new interested in garden club!*
- ★ **Deep South Region Director Debby:** *Deep South Garden Clubs members encourage all NGC members to do a bit more in 2025 than they did in 2024!*
- ★ **Pacific Region Director Carol:** *Wishing you a fresh start, full of hope, inspiration, and new pages.*
- ★ **Rocky Mountain Region Director Robbie:** *Wishing garden club members a prosperous and fun-filled new year.*
- ★ **South Atlantic Region Director Carcille:** *SAR sends warmest greetings to all of you...wishing all a prosperous and joyous year!*
- ★ **South Central Region Director Sarah:** *Here is to a new garden club year from South Central Region. Ole'*
- ★ **NGC Staff:** *May 2025 bring the NGC community Health and Happiness!*



HAPPY NEW YEAR

2025 • Xoroshu

Charleston, a Charmingly Southern Destination

96TH ANNUAL NATIONAL GARDEN CLUBS CONVENTION
MAY 18 - 22, 2025



Dear NGC Members and Guests,

National Garden Clubs and the members of the Garden Club of South Carolina invite you to the 96th Annual NGC Convention on May 18-22, 2025, in *Charleston, a Charmingly Southern Destination*.

The convention occurs at the Embassy Suites Charleston Convention Center, near the Charleston Airport. The Embassy Suites gave us an excellent room price, and they recently renovated the entire hotel, including all the rooms. Of course, they always offer a lovely complimentary hot breakfast and the Manager's afternoon special, which includes cocktails and appetizers. Free parking is also available.

The convention schedule allows members to attend committee and NGC business meetings early in the day. Then, there is plenty of time after the Awards and Design Luncheons to tour beautiful downtown Charleston. We have many exciting tours, workshops, and seminars for your education and enjoyment. The committee has graciously made special arrangements for convenient *free* transportation to get you to and from the hotel and your touring destinations. There is so much to do in the charmingly southern city of Charleston; you won't want to miss a thing!

You will enjoy Southern hospitality at three banquets and two luncheons, where we will celebrate the accomplishments of the 2023-2025 National Garden Clubs administration. The Tuesday Evening Banquet features the NGC Award of Excellence winners and NGC Awards. We are very excited to welcome Garden & Gun Magazine owner and Charlestonian Rebecca Darwin to give the keynote address at the Wednesday Evening Banquet.

Dress up and enjoy the Installation Banquet on Thursday evening, where we will welcome the 2025-2027 administration and then celebrate at the Afterparty with live entertainment and LINE dancing.

We can't wait to see ya'!!

Convention Chair Cindy and Vice Chairs Linda and Becky.

Contact Chair [Cindy Thornton](#) or Vice Chair [Linda Howle](#) and [Becky Crow](#) if you have any questions.

Convention Schedule



Sunday, May 18 - Preconvention

7:00 AM	7:00 PM	NGC Staff Office
7:00 AM	7:00 PM	Floral Workroom
7:00 AM	5:00 PM	Awards Workroom
2:00 PM	5:00 PM	Registration and Credentials Open
2:00 PM	6:00 PM	Tour: Middleton Place Plantation

Monday, May 19 - Committee Meeting Day

7:00 AM	7:00 PM	NGC Staff Office
7:00 AM	7:00 PM	Floral Workroom
8:00 AM	7:00 PM	Awards Workroom
8:00 AM	11:00 AM	Registration and Credentials Open
8:00 AM	12:00 PM	Vendors Set Up
8:30 AM	9:30 AM	Organization Study Committee Meeting
9:00 AM	10:00 AM	Youth Committee Meeting
9:00 AM	10:00 AM	Gardening School Committee Meeting
9:00 AM	11:00 AM	Flower Show School Committee Meeting
9:45 AM	10:45 AM	Finance Committee Meeting
10:00 AM	11:00 AM	Historian's Meeting
10:00 AM	11:00 AM	Landscape Design School Committee Meeting
11:00 AM	12:00 PM	Environmental School Committee Meeting
11:00 AM	12:30 PM	Permanent Home & Endowment Trustees Meeting
11:45 AM	4:45 PM	Free Time OR Tour: <i>Magnolia Gardens</i>
12:00 PM	1:30 PM	Optional Lunch: Must Pre-purchase
12:00 PM	5:00 PM	Vendors Open for Business
12:30 PM	5:00 PM	Tours: <i>Don't Tread on Me, Patriots</i> OR <i>Grand Houses of Charleston</i> OR <i>Historic Carriage Tour</i>
1:00 PM	2:00 PM	Social Media Committee Meeting
1:00 PM	2:30 PM	Schools' Policy Committee Meeting
2:30 PM	4:00 PM	International Affiliates/COMAAI
3:00 PM	5:00 PM	Registration and Credentials Open
		Dinner On Your Own

Convention Schedule



Tuesday, May 20 - Awards Day

7:00 AM	7:00 PM	NGC Staff Office
7:00 AM	7:00 PM	Floral Workroom
8:00 AM	11:00 AM	Registration and Credentials Open
9:00 AM	5:00 PM	Vendors Open for Business
9:00 AM	10:00 AM	2023 – 2025 Executive Committee Meeting
10:30 AM	12:00 PM	2025 – 2027 Executive Committee Meeting
12:00 PM	1:45 PM	Luncheon: Youth Awards and <i>Keep America Beautiful</i> Speaker
2:30 PM	4:00 PM	2023 – 2025 Board of Directors Meeting
2:30 PM	5:00 PM	Free Time OR Tour: <i>Discover Charleston’s Unique Historic District</i> OR <i>Gullah Tour</i>
3:00 PM	5:00 PM	Registration and Credentials Open
2:00 PM	5:00 PM	Workshop: <i>Pine Needle Basketry</i>
2:30 PM	3:15 PM	Seminar: <i>Learn About Indigo</i>
3:30 PM	4:15 PM	Seminar: <i>Sweetgrass</i>
5:15 PM	6:00 PM	Awards Ceremony Rehearsal – Region Directors, State Presidents, and International Affiliates
6:00 PM	7:00 PM	Social Hour
7:00 PM	9:00 PM	Awards Banquet

Wednesday, May 21 – Keynote Speaker Day

7:00 AM	7:00 PM	NGC Staff Office
7:00 AM	7:00 PM	Floral Workroom
8:00 AM	11:00 AM	Registration and Credentials Open
9:00 AM	5:00 PM	Vendors Open for Business
8:30 AM	9:45 AM	Incoming and Outgoing Region Directors and State Presidents Meeting
10:00 AM	11:30 AM	NGC General Business Meeting Opening Session
		Lunch On Own
12:00 PM	5:00 PM	Free Time OR Tour: <i>Don’t Tread on Me: The Patriots Fight for Liberty in Charleston</i> OR <i>Grand Houses Of Charleston Walking Tour</i> OR <i>Historic Charleston Carriage Tour</i>
2:00 PM	5:00 PM	Workshops: <i>Indigo Dyeing</i> OR <i>Sweetgrass Braiding</i>
3:00 PM	5:00 PM	Registration and Credentials Open
2:30 PM	3:30 PM	Youth Presentation
6:00 PM	7:00 PM	Social Hour
7:00 PM	9:00 PM	Keynote Banquet: Speaker Rebecca Darwin, Garden & Gun Magazine Owner

Convention Schedule



Thursday, May 22 – Installation Day

7:00 AM	7:00 PM	NGC Staff Office
7:00 AM	7:00 PM	Floral Workroom
8:00 AM	12:00 PM	Registration Open
8:00 AM	9:30 AM	Credentials Open
9:00 AM	5:00 PM	Vendors Open for Business
9:30 AM	11:00 AM	NGC General Business Meeting Closing Session
11:30 AM	1:30 PM	Luncheon: Honors New 4/5 Star & Life Members, Golden Circle Members, and Design Program
1:45 PM	5:15 PM	Free Time OR Tour: <i>Historic Charleston City and Harbor</i> OR <i>Charleston's Kingdom by The Sea</i>
2:00 PM	4:00 PM	2025 – 2027 Board of Directors Meeting
2:00 PM	5:00 PM	Tour: <i>Charleston Kingdom by the Sea</i>
2:00 PM	5:00 PM	Workshop: <i>Sweetgrass Braiding</i>
2:30 PM	3:15 PM	Seminar: <i>Learn About Flax</i>
3:30 PM	4:15 PM	Seminar: <i>Pine Needle and Coiling</i>
5:00 PM	6:00 PM	Installation Ceremony Rehearsal
6:00 PM	7:00 PM	Social Hour
7:00 PM	9:00 PM	Installation Banquet
9:00 PM	11:00 PM	After Party: Entertainment and Line Dancing

Friday, May 23 – Post Convention Tours

9:00 AM	2:00 PM	Tours: <i>Magnolia Gardens Tour with Lunch</i> OR <i>Charleston Tea Garden Tour with Lunch</i>
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Convention Registration: [NGC 2025 CONVENTION](#)

Hotel Registration: [EMBASSY SUITES](#)

Embassy Suites by Hilton, Charleston Convention Center (843-981-0575)
5055 International Boulevard, North Charleston, SC

Hotel Booking Deadline is April 28, 2025. Please book directly with the hotel use group: **NATIONAL GARDEN CLUB**. Room rates per night do not include applicable state and local taxes: Single/Double/Upgrade \$145 • Triple \$155 • Quad \$165. Hotel provides an airport shuttle, free parking, and a shuttle to the Old Market Place. More information: [NGC 2025 Convention](#).

Convention Tours



Cost of tours includes Guide/Coordinator Service - where applicable, Charter Coach Service - where applicable, Attraction Visits in the Tours, Permits, Fees, Taxes, and Gratuities. See the online convention registration form for tour costs. Tours include lunch **only** where indicated. (All tours have a required minimum and maximum number of attendees to proceed. The convention committee will notify participants of any changes.)

Sunday, May 18

Middleton Place Plantation Tour (2:00 PM – 6:00 PM)

Visit Middleton Place, a Registered National Historic Landmark and the plantation home of the Middleton family since 1741. As you stroll through Henry Middleton's magnificent Formal Gardens of 1741 (the oldest in America), you will see the Camellia Allee, Butterfly Lakes, Middleton Oak, and the Wood Nymph carved in marble in 1810 by the German Sculptor Johan Rudolph Schadow. You may explore the stable yards, a living outdoor museum where the behind-the-scenes story of life on an 18th-century plantation is displayed via animals, artifacts, and craft exhibits. You will learn about the lives of enslaved Africans and African Americans who worked in the rice fields and cultivated the crop that produced wealth for the Middleton family. Complete your visit with a tour of the remaining wing of the Middleton House furnished with heirlooms from the family.

Monday, May 19

Magnolia Gardens Tour (11:45 AM – 4:45 PM)

Carved from a Cypress Swamp by the Reverend John Drayton in the early 19th century, Magnolia Gardens is considered one of the most beautiful romantic gardens in the world. As you stroll her lush garden pathways, these unique gardens will enchant you. After touring the gardens, board the Nature Train, which takes you into part of the Audubon Swamp Garden, home to scores of water-loving creatures. You will also pass by the restored enslaved peoples' cabins, which interpret African American life on the plantation. You may even see an alligator and will have the opportunity to view the abundant bird population of the Lowcountry. To complete your plantation experience, tour Magnolia's unique Plantation House and enjoy a delicious boxed lunch at the Magnolia Pavilion. The included boxed lunch contains a choice of a ham and cheddar sandwich or a peacock salad, plus a cookie and water.

Don't Tread on Me: The Patriots Fight for Liberty in Charleston (12:30 PM – 5:00 PM)

From the Charleston taverns to the Liberty Tree and to the homes of those who desired us to be our own country, this tour explores Charleston during the American Revolution and how this "royal city," with its divided loyalties, would shape the future of this country. The tour includes 45 minutes of free time in the Old City Market.

Grand Houses of Charleston Walking Tour (12:30 PM – 5:00 PM)

Stroll down lovely streets and lanes with your guide and view the marvelous architecture of homes built over a century ago. During this special walking tour, you will visit two of the finest houses in Charleston. The Heyward-Washington House, built in 1772, includes one of the city's two most outstanding collections of Charleston-made furniture. President George Washington resided in this lovely Georgian House during his week's visit to Charleston in 1791. This house also boasts one of the few original kitchen houses in the city. Our second stop will be at the Nathaniel Russell House, which holds an equally fine collection of Charleston-made furniture. Its spiraling cantilevered staircase is truly a work of art, as is the house itself. Not only will you visit these houses, but along the way, your guides will point out historically significant homes, grand churches, exquisite gardens, and many other points of interest. The tour includes 45 minutes of free time in the Old City Market.

Convention Tours



Monday, May 19 (continued)

Historic Charleston Carriage Tour (12:30 PM – 5:00 PM)

Enjoy the sights of Charleston the way our ancestors did - aboard a horse-drawn carriage. This leisurely ride through narrow streets and alleyways carries you past carefully restored 18th and 19th-century homes and buildings. Your knowledgeable guide relates three hundred years of history to the accompaniment of horse's hooves clapping along the pavement. The scent of tea olive from nearby gardens lingers in the air as you snap that special photograph capturing a bit of Charleston's history. The tour includes two and one-half hours of free time in the Old City Market.

Tuesday, May 20

Discover Charleston's Unique Historic District (2:30 PM – 5:00 PM)

You will tour Charleston, one of the South's most beautiful and historic cities. Her stately homes with their lovely gardens, magnificent public buildings, and majestic churches, will enchant you. As you tour, you will see the College of Charleston, Harleston village (one of the early suburbs of the city), the Citadel, the Military College for South Carolina, and, of course, our famous Battery with its elegant townhouses built by planters and merchants in the 18th and 19th centuries. Your expert guide will entertain you with fascinating history and lively stories about some of our prominent sites. Some landmarks you will pass are St. Michael's Episcopal Church, whose bells have crossed the Atlantic seven times, and the Old Exchange and Provost Dungeon, where Revolutionary Prisoners were held captive by the British. You will also see the Fireproof Building, designed by the same architect who designed the Washington Monument, and the Old City Market, which has been a public market for over two hundred years.

Gullah Tour (2:30 PM – 5:00 PM)

The Gullah tour explores the places, history, and stories that are relevant to the varied contributions made by Black Charlestonians to the area and the whole country. You will hear some stories in the Gullah dialect with translation following. During the tour, you will view the lovely homes along the Battery, 18th-century Rainbow Row, and the College of Charleston area where many free African Americans lived. You will see magnificent public buildings, churches, and many other points of interest. You will also hear some wonderful Gullah stories. A highlight of the tour is a stop at Phillip Simmons Blacksmith Shop. Mr. Simmons was a local African American blacksmith renowned for his beautiful decorative ironwork.

Wednesday, May 21

Don't Tread On Me: The Patriots Fight For Liberty In Charleston (12:00 PM – 5:00 PM)

From the Charleston taverns to the Liberty Tree and to the homes of those who desired us to be our own country, this tour will explore Charleston during the American Revolution and how this "royal city," with its divided loyalties, would shape the future of this country. The tour includes one hour of free time in the Old City Market.

Grand Houses Of Charleston Walking Tour (12:00 PM – 5:00 PM)

Stroll down lovely streets and lanes with your guide and view the marvelous architecture of homes built over a century ago. During this special walking tour, you will visit two of the finest houses in Charleston. The Heyward-Washington House, built in 1772, includes one of the city's two most outstanding collections of Charleston-made furniture. President George Washington resided in this lovely Georgian House during his week's visit to Charleston in 1791, and this house also boasts one of the few original kitchen houses in the city. Our second stop will be at the Nathaniel Russell House, which holds an equally fine collection of Charleston-made furniture. Its spiraling cantilevered staircase is truly a work of art, as is the house itself. Not only will you visit these houses, but your guides will also point out historically significant homes, grand churches, exquisite gardens, and many other points of interest. This tour includes 45 minutes of free time in the Old City Market.

Convention Tours



Wednesday, May 21 (continued)

Historic Charleston Carriage Tour (12:00 PM – 4:00 PM)

Enjoy the sights of Charleston the way our ancestors did, aboard a horse-drawn carriage. This leisurely ride through narrow streets and alleyways carries you past carefully restored 18th and 19th-century homes and buildings. Your knowledgeable guide relates three hundred years of history to the accompaniment of horse's hooves clapping along the pavement. The scent of tea olive from nearby gardens lingers in the air as you snap that special photograph capturing a bit of Charleston's history. This tour includes one and one-half hours of free time in the Old City Market.

Thursday, May 22, 2025

Historic Charleston City and Harbor (1:45 PM – 5:15 PM)

Tour Charleston's beautiful old historic district with a drive through the Citadel, the Military College of South Carolina. View the lovely homes along the Battery, 18th century Rainbow Row, magnificent public buildings and churches, and many other points of interest. End your city tour at Aquarium Wharf, where you will board the General Beauregard for your tour of the harbor. As you cruise through Charleston Harbor, you will view the lovely mansions along the Battery and Fort Sumter, where the Civil War began. Throughout the tour, you will hear a fascinating narrative about the many points of interest, including Castle Pinckney, Drum Island, and Charleston Port, one of the country's largest container ports.

Charleston's Kingdom By The Sea (2:00 PM – 5:00 PM)

You will tour Charleston, one of the South's most unique and historic cities. During this informative excursion, your guide relates over 300 years of history while passing by historic churches, magnificent public buildings, and many other points of interest, including St. Michael's Church, The Citadel, Rainbow Row, The Battery, and more. The highlights of this outing are visits to the Second Presbyterian Church, c. 1809-1811, and the Joseph Manigault House, c. 1803. Built by a wealthy rice planter, this house is considered one of the country's finest examples of Federal Architecture. The Garden Club of Charleston lovingly maintains the Manigault House garden. Instead of the Joseph Manigault House, guests with difficulty walking may visit the Charleston Museum, which has marvelous collections that interpret the history and opulent lifestyle of the early Charlestonians.

Friday, May 23, 2025

Magnolia Gardens Tour (9:00 AM – 2:00 PM)

Carved from a Cypress Swamp by the Reverend John Drayton in the early 19th century, Magnolia Gardens is considered one of the most beautiful romantic gardens in the world. As you stroll her lush garden pathways, these unique gardens will enchant you. After touring the gardens, board the Nature Train, which takes you into part of the Audubon Swamp Garden, home to scores of water-loving creatures. You will also pass by the restored enslaved peoples' cabins, which interpret African American life on the plantation. You may even see an alligator and will have the opportunity to view the abundant bird population of the Lowcountry. To complete your plantation experience, tour Magnolia's unique Plantation House and enjoy a delicious boxed lunch at the Magnolia Pavilion. The included boxed lunch contains a choice of a ham and cheddar sandwich or a peacock salad, plus a cookie and water.

Charleston Tea Garden Tour (9:00 AM – 2:00 PM)

As you cross beautiful marshlands and travel lovely live oak canopied roads, you will be treated to the history of the large plantations that once occupied these islands. You will hear stories of the unique culture and language of the Sea Islands' black

Convention Tours



people who worked these plantations. The tour includes views of rich farmland and forests, a drive past St. John's Episcopal Church, and the Angel Oak, a 300-year-old live oak tree. The tour's highlight is a stop at the Charleston Tea Garden, the only mechanized tea farm in the United States. Over 100 years ago, tea planters brought their finest tea bushes from China, India, and Ceylon to the South Carolina Lowcountry. Now, the descendants of those very plants are growing strong at the nation's only tea plantation, nestled on a serene sea island near the historic city of Charleston. As you enter the Tea Garden, you will see thousands of tea plants growing on acres and acres of rich and fertile Lowcountry soil. A stroll under the avenue of oaks will take you to the factory porch, which affords remarkable plantation views. The adventure includes an informative, narrated trolley tour of the grounds and the Tea Factory. The included boxed lunch contains a choice of an Oven-Roasted Turkey or Vegetarian Sandwich with chips, a cookie, and iced tea or water at the Tea Garden.

Seminars & Workshops

Tuesday, May 20

Pine Needle Basketry Workshop (2:00 PM - 5:00 PM)

You will make your own pine needle creation to take home - all materials provided.

Learn About Indigo Seminar (2:30 PM - 3:15 PM)

You will hear an interesting presentation on South Carolina's second cash crop during colonial times.

Sweetgrass Seminar (3:30 PM - 4:15 PM)

The presenter will discuss the creation of a traditional sweetgrass basket

Wednesday, May 21

Indigo Dyeing Workshop (2:00 PM - 5:00 PM)

You will dye a scarf or bandana to take home - all materials provided

Sweetgrass Braiding Workshop (2:00 PM - 5:00 PM)

You will make a sweetgrass basket and take home a handmade treasure - all materials provided.

Youth Presentation (2:30 PM - 3:30 PM)

NGC Youth Chair Bob Markey discusses opportunities for working with youth in your community.

Thursday, May 22

Sweetgrass Braiding Workshop (2:00 PM - 5:00 PM)

You will make a sweetgrass basket and take home a handmade treasure - all materials provided.

Learn About Flax Seminar (2:30 PM - 3:15 PM)

You will learn the fascinating process of turning *Linum usitatissimum* (Flax) plants into fiber.

Pine Needle and Coiling Seminar (3:30 PM - 4:15 PM)

You will hear the story of South Carolina pine needle basketry and the tradition of coiling grasses, reeds, and pine needles

Assemble your favorite plant people for

GARDEN CLUB DAY

MONDAY, MARCH 3

 **PHS**
2025
PHILADELPHIA
FLOWER SHOW

GARDENS OF TOMORROW

CONTACT ADVTIX@PENNHORT.ORG

GROUP DISCOUNTS AVAILABLE



CALLING YOUNG WRITERS!

James Pavelka & Bob Markey

NGC welcomes young writers to enter our Youth Poetry and Essay Contests. See the [NGC Youth Contests and Activities](#) webpage for more details or contact [James Pavelka](#), Chair.

NGC 2025 YOUTH ESSAY CONTEST

**IS RECYCLING PLASTICS THE ANSWER
TO OUR PLASTIC DISPOSAL PROBLEM?**

WHO'S ELIGIBLE?

Grade 9 – Grade 12
General Education, Special Education or
English for Speakers of Other Languages
who are either NGC Youth Club members or ANY kid
when sponsored by a local affiliated NGC garden club

For details go to
www.gardenclub.org
Youth & Scholarship/Contest & Activities
OR your state garden club's website!

**CLUB ENTRIES MUST BE SENT TO
YOUR STATE YOUTH CHAIRMAN:
OBSERVE YOUR STATE DEADLINE!**

For more information email:
[James.Pavelka](mailto:James.Pavelka@NGC.org), NGC Essay Contest Chairman



NGC 2025 YOUTH POETRY CONTEST

MY GARDEN HAS VEGETABLES TO SPARE THAT I CAN SHARE



**HELPING FIGHT HUNGER BY SHARING
VEGETABLES FROM OUR GARDEN**

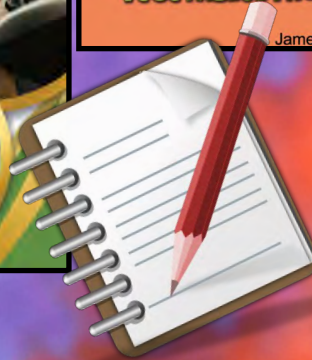
For more information email:
[James.Pavelka](mailto:James.Pavelka@NGC.org), NGC Poetry Contest Chairperson

WHO'S ELIGIBLE?

Grade K– Grade 12
General Education, Special Education or
English for Speakers of Other Languages
who are either
NGC Youth Club members
or ANY kid when sponsored
by a local affiliated NGC garden club

For details go to
www.gardenclub.org
Youth & Scholarship/Contest & Activities
OR your state garden club's website!

**CLUB ENTRIES MUST BE SENT
TO YOUR STATE YOUTH CHAIRPERSON:
OBSERVE YOUR STATE DEADLINE**



Background • Gadost



Wildlife Habitat • Gerianne Holzman

NGC CERTIFIED WILDLIFE HABITAT PROGRAM

Barbara Campbell

Once again, I am excited to share updates on President Brenda Moore's project, Wildlife Habitat Certification for your garden. It is encouraging to see many members throughout the United States who care about supporting wildlife and using good sustainable gardening practices to encourage animals. These members make a difference by providing shelter, food, water, and safety. With the destruction of natural habitats, it is crucial for each of us to do our share to protect wildlife, one garden at a time. I have certified 188 gardens nationwide. Thirty percent of those are in the Central Atlantic Region, with the small state of Delaware having 18, the highest number. They are followed closely by Florida, with 14 gardens. If you have not yet applied, visit the NGC website and click on [PLANT AMERICA – Wildlife Habitat Certification Program](#). You will see an application form. Let us keep these numbers climbing. The wildlife and I thank you.

[Barbara Campbell](#), of New York, is the NGC PLANT AMERICA - Landscape for Wildlife Chair

You'll find Neal Sanders at the intersection of horticulture and humor.

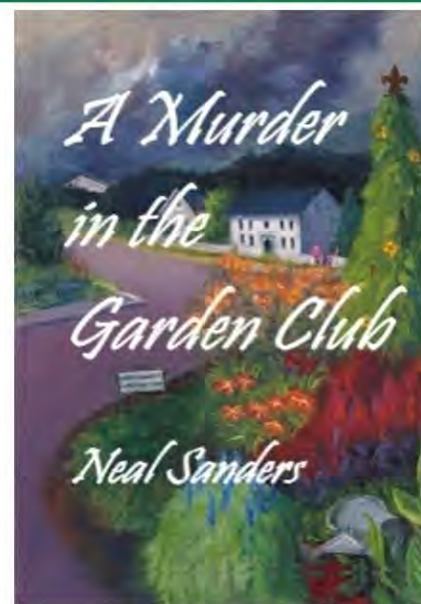
Whether it's a speaker for your special meeting (offering, in the words of one club, "a horticultural lecture unlike anything we've ever heard") or books that will keep you turning pages well past your bedtime, Neal Sanders needs to be on your contact list.

He is one of the most entertaining speakers you'll ever hear. 'Gardening Is Murder' is equal parts humor, psychology, and gardening wisdom; a husband's point of view of what goes on in the garden. State federations from Maine to South Carolina and Michigan to Kentucky have enjoyed his talks. In 2025, he'll be at the Washington State federation and Central Atlantic Region meetings and, in 2026, Florida and Pennsylvania. To book him for your club, state, or regional event in 2025 and 2026, write Neal02052@gmail.com.



His 15 fast-paced, intricately plotted mysteries draw rave reviews from readers. They all feature strong, independent women – some of whom solve crimes, and some who commit them. Many of his books use garden club settings and 'women of a certain age'.

But don't mistake these for 'cozies': his plots involve everything from romance scams to 'protect your assets' schemes and fraudulent reverse mortgages. There's frequently a strong horticultural element.



You can order his books in print and Kindle formats on Amazon.

Or, you can go to www.TheHardingtonPress.com to explore his titles and read first chapters.



NOMINATIONS

Nomination Image • Vjorn

Betty Cookendorfer and Nancy Rana



Congratulations Donna Donnelly NGC President-elect

Donna is the National Garden Clubs' President-elect. She served NGC as Recording Secretary 2019-2021, Third Vice President 2021-2023, and Second Vice President for part of the 2023-2025 term. She has chaired the Finance and Organization Studies Committees, among other duties. Donna accomplished many state and regional responsibilities with distinction prior to becoming President of the Garden Club of South Carolina in 2017-2019. She is an active member of the South Atlantic Region, having served as Corresponding Secretary for two terms, 2013-2015 and 2015-2017. Donna is an excellent leader, committed worker, and motivator. She consistently gives her best to the garden club organizations that she loves and serves.

The NGC Nominating Committee is delighted to nominate the following candidates for the 2025-2027 Term of Office.

The elections take place at the 2025 NGC Annual Meeting. Please note that Donna Donnelly is the President-elect and the assembly does not vote upon this office.



First Vice President - Gerianne Holzman

Gerianne's goals include a desire to serve the members of NGC to the best of her ability. As the NGC's Third Vice President, Gerianne served as the chair of the Organization Studies Committee and gained significant insights into the NGC's inner workings through her interaction with other officers, board members, and staff. Gerianne currently serves as NGC's Second Vice President, chairs the Finance Committee, and works with the Budget Committee to create the NGC budgets. She has continued her role as the editor of *The National Gardener*. Before entering leadership roles for NGC, Gerianne was very active in the Wisconsin Garden Club Federation (President 2015 – 2017) and the NGC Central Region. She performed numerous leadership roles and received many honors and recognitions for her volunteer and professional accomplishments.

(Betty Cookendorfer, of Ohio, is the Nominating Committee Chair and Nancy Rana, of Arkansas, is the Vice Chair.)



Second Vice President - Suzanne Andregro

Suzanne (Suzy) held many positions in New Mexico Garden Clubs before becoming state president for the term 2015-2017. Her excellent leadership and organizational skills were evidenced by her successful term. She held several positions in the South Central Region and National Garden Clubs, including Flower Show Schools and NGC instructors Credentials Chair. Suzy is excited about this opportunity to help NGC grow and evolve.



Third Vice President - Susan Miner

Susan (Sue) has been a dedicated local garden club member and served in many capacities for her state, New Hampshire Federation of Garden Clubs (NHFGC), before becoming President in the 2019-2023 term. She received the NHFGC Finch Award in 2021 for outstanding leadership. Sue is the New England Region Director for the term of 2023-2025. She also currently serves NGC as the Third Vice President.



Recording Secretary - Monica Hansen

Monica served as many local club and state chairs before becoming the Federated Garden Clubs of New York State (FGCNY) President from 2017-2019. She is the Director of the Central Atlantic Region of State Garden Clubs (CAR-SGC) for the term of 2023-2025. Monica serves NGC as our Recording Secretary and looks forward to filling that position again. She is a Master Flower Show Judge and was awarded the NGC 5-Star Award in 2023.



Treasurer - Lynette Jeffres

Lynette has enjoyed serving and working with the members of her local club, Riverton Garden Club. She became the Wyoming Federation of Garden Clubs President for the 2009-2011 term and has returned to fill that office for three

additional terms. Lynette held other state positions and had various responsibilities for the Rocky Mountain Region. She served four terms as National Garden Clubs' Treasurer, is on the Finance Committee, and chairs the Budget Committee. Lynette looks for more opportunities to serve NGC members.



DOWN THE GARDEN PATH
Landscape Design
School News
Carol Yee

The Landscape Design School Courses Required and Recommended Reading Lists have now been updated and placed on the NGC website's [Schools Resources](#) page under LDS Special Forms. For almost two years, Laura Lawson's [A Brief History of Urban Garden Programs in the United States](#) was unavailable because the link was not operable. Recent contact was made with Dr. Laura J. Lawson, Executive Dean of the School of Environmental and Biological Sciences, Executive Director of New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station, and Distinguished Professor of the Department of Landscape Architecture at Rutgers University, New Brunswick, New Jersey. Special thanks to Dr. Lawson for her updated reference and link. Also updated is the Landscape Design School Chairs Directory located on the Schools Resources page. Please let me know if there are any changes to your State Landscape Design School Chairs.

A valuable resource for schools' students and consultants is the *Guide for Students and Consultants Maintaining Certification* on the NGC website's [Schools Resources](#) page. It describes what a student/consultant must do if unable to or has not completed courses or refreshers on time. This time limit is seven years for students taking four courses or five years for consultants who are refreshing. Since COVID, many students and consultants have pursued the following opportunities to keep their schools' credentials current.

- **Extensions:** If a student cannot complete the school courses needed or a consultant is unable to refresh by the end of a calendar year, they can submit Form 9 to their state school chair for an extension of one calendar year. (Remember all forms are fillable and on the NGC website/Schools Resources Page)
- **Reinstatements:** If a consultant is not eligible to use Extension Form 9, reinstatement may be possible within seven years from the date of certification by completing two courses with no exams required. Consultants should check with their state school chair to initiate Reinstatement Form 10. Consultants must take the first refresher within two years of their reinstatement.

If all else fails, students and consultants may retake the four courses. There is no longer a minimum allotted time between courses. So, anyone can complete all four courses within one year. Retaking courses may be worth considering as previous courses differ from what NGC now offers. Ideally, try to avoid the above situations. Zoom courses make it easier to lose track of when, where, and which course a person attended. **It is the responsibility of students and consultants to keep track of their own records.** Zoom courses and changes that made taking back-to-back courses available and possible have made the certification process more confusing, complicated, and time-consuming for all involved. With time, this will get easier.

[Carol Yee](#), of Illinois, is the NGC Landscape Design School Chair, contact Carol with your questions or to start a School in your state or visit the [LDS webpage](#)



Claire Brown Stepleton

We just returned from a trip to AZ and UT where I scored a permit by lottery to The Wave in the Paria Canyon-Vermillion Cliffs Wilderness Area in Arizona. We arrived in the early morning to catch the good light, but I did not like the shadows on the formations. We waited until the sun was higher, and to avoid 'wash out,' used a shutter speed of 1/1000 sec. C. Brown Stepleton



Lynn O'Shaughnessy

I was taking photos of my New England Aster flowers in bloom and spotted these that had a field of yellow goldenrod about 50 to 60 feet away in the background. I love the background's soft, muted colors and how it complements the colors of the aster flowers. I also lightened the photo to make it a high-key photo. I really liked the week we tried high-key. L. O'Shaughnessy



Shannon M Fitzpatrick

I think these water plants make the coolest design. S. Fitzpatrick



Page Steed

I took this photo in the Valle Vidal of northeastern New Mexico, Sangre de Cristo mountains. The aspens were vibrant with golden color, but the bark pattern on the lower trunks interested me and drew me in. This is primarily because of damage from animals like elk, which frequently strip the bark from the lower part of the tree for food, leaving behind dark scars that accumulate over time. What a fascinating result it made for this photo! P. Steed

THROUGH THE LENS

Lynn O'Shaughnessy

The *NGC Photographers Facebook* group allows members to share their photography with an eye toward capturing photos representing the weekly themes. The themes vary quite a bit, including composition techniques, colors, seasonal nature, and more. The purpose is to help members improve their photos by seeing what others are doing, getting out, and trying new things themselves. Every so often, there will be a theme called "Open Share," which gives members a chance to share photos they are proud of but do not fit any other themes. Here are four images from a recent "Open Share" theme, along with the photographer's comments. We encourage comments to help others learn. We welcome you to join us! Look for [NGC Photographers](#) on Facebook and answer all the membership questions.

Lynn O'Shaughnessy, of Michigan, is an *NGC Photographers Group* Administrator. She loves nature photography and inspiring others to improve their photos. She took most of her pictures with her Samsung phone until she purchased a new Canon R7 digital camera this spring. She enjoys entering competitions and has been doing well in them.

GEORGIA O'KEEFFE - THE VAST, AMAZING GEOGRAPHY AND LANDSCAPE/ LA VASTA, ASOMBROSA GEOGRAFÍA Y PAISAJE Ana María Gastaldi



Georgia O'Keeffe (1887-1986) was an American modernist artist known for her powerful paintings of flowers and the iconic landscapes of the American Southwest, a territory she made her home for the second half of her life. To any conception of "territory", as a portion of the earth's surface belonging to a nation or a region, with its own geographical characteristics and an established and immovable order; this artist juxtaposes her personal search and turns it into her own space, as an assemblage between herself and the territory, to build her own landscape and her own story. *At night, I go up to the desert and spend hours watching the sunset, simply enjoying it. And every day I go out and see it again,* she wrote.

She found inspiration in the depths of New Mexico, where she lived for 35 years. She regularly painted its landscapes or the sky around it and described it as the landscape she had "waited for her entire life." She covered all that territory, walked it, photographed it, and translated it into unpublished images with a changing aesthetic expression over the years through her observation and interpretation.

Becoming more and more involved with that landscape, she began to read it as a fusion of lines, shapes, and colors that evoked the vastness and beauty of the natural environment, translating it with a unique approach. Thus, her landscapes are a reduction of the cardinal and a search to transmit the essence and atmosphere of the place, not only its physical appearance. *Nothing is less real than realism. The details are confusing. It is only by selection, by elimination, by emphasis, that we arrive at the true meaning of things,* said O'Keeffe.

Abstracting, disintegrating, fragmenting, dematerializing, and deconstructing are some of the many ways to approach the phenomenal and inexhaustible universe of abstract language. Almost metaphor, almost poetry, suggestive and versatile, O'Keeffe's work allows one to free oneself from all representation to all thought, all sensation that captures the observer. From her attire to her photographic image to her homes and her work, they were all an expression of this austere search, an image of the essential that brought American art to a new era.

Abstract Design. (Handbook for Flower Shows, page 77)
A creative design whose dominant components are chosen for their non-naturalistic characteristics and organized in a non-realistic manner.

Architect Ana María Gastaldi is an NGC Master Judge and Design Instructor. [Click for more O'Keeffe Art.](#)

Georgia O'Keeffe (1887-1986) fue una artista modernista estadounidense, conocida por sus poderosas pinturas de flores y los paisajes icónicos del suroeste de Estados Unidos, territorio que hizo su hogar durante la segunda mitad de su vida. A toda concepción de "territorio", como una porción de la superficie terrestre perteneciente a una nación o una región, con características geográficas propias y un orden establecido e inamovible; esta artista opone su búsqueda personal y lo convierte en su propio espacio, como un ensamblaje entre ella y el territorio, para construir su propio paisaje y su propia historia *"Por la noche subo al desierto y paso horas viendo la puesta de sol, simplemente disfrutándolo, y todos los días salgo y lo vuelvo a ver"* escribió.

Encontró inspiración en lo profundo de Nueva México, donde vivió durante 35 años, pintando regularmente sus paisajes o el cielo de su alrededor y lo describió como el paisaje que había "esperado toda su vida". Recorrió todo ese territorio, lo caminó, lo fotografió y lo tradujo en imágenes inéditas con una expresión estética cambiante en los años, a través de su observación e interpretación.

Cada vez más compenetrada con ese paisaje comienza a leerlo como una fusión de líneas, formas y colores que evocan la vastedad y la belleza del entorno natural traduciéndolo con un enfoque único. Así, sus paisajes son una reducción de lo cardinal y una búsqueda de transmitir la esencia y la atmósfera del lugar no solo su apariencia física. *"Nada es menos real que el realismo. Los detalles son confusos. Es sólo por selección, por eliminación, por énfasis, que llegamos al verdadero significado de las cosas"* decía O'Keeffe.

Abstraer, desintegrar, fragmentar, desmaterializar, deconstruir...son algunas de las muchas maneras de aproximarnos al fenomenal e inagotable universo del lenguaje abstracto. Casi metáfora, casi poesía, sugerente y polivalente, la obra de O'Keeffe permite liberarse de toda representación y es todo pensamiento, toda sensación que atrapa al observador. Desde su vestuario, su imagen fotográfica, sus casas a su obra fueron expresión de esta búsqueda austera, imagen de lo esencial que llevó el arte norteamericano a una nueva era.

Diseño Abstracto. MEF Pág 72: *El espacio es esencial para crear nuevos patrones. Son importantes la organización plástica y la penetración del espacio.*

La Arquitecta Ana María Gastaldi es Juez Maestra e Instructora de Diseño de NGC. [Haga clic para ver más arte de O'Keeffe.](#)

NGC GIVES AID

DEBRA TURNER



National Garden Clubs, so far, awarded more than \$35,000 in grants for the restoration of trees and plant materials lost during natural disasters during Brenda Moore's term as president of the NGC. All of the awarded money came from donations, mainly from garden clubs and members. Thank you all; you can be proud of the good work your money has done. Your donations funded restoration projects sponsored by our non-profit state garden clubs or member clubs.

About \$45,000 remains in the Natural Disaster Fund as of mid-November. To donate to the fund, you may do so online at nationalgardenclub.org through the "Forever Growing Online Donation Form" or by mailing a check to the NGC headquarters at 4401 Magnolia Ave., St. Louis, MO, 63110. The Natural Disaster Grant Chair does not handle donations; these go directly to Headquarters. However, the volunteer chair does evaluate applications for grants.

Applicants are not in competition with each other. The chair can and often asks applicants to be more specific when they itemize and estimate the costs of their plant materials. Based on these justified itemized and estimated costs of plant materials, the Natural Disaster Grant Chair then requests the special projects manager at NGC headquarters to issue a check to the club seeking the grant. The grant application form is available online at NGC's website's [Natural Disasters Grant](#) page. The garden club member writing the grant

request needs to establish that a natural disaster did occur, show evidence of the damage caused, and present a plan for replanting.

Projects are varied. One was a restoration of trees and native plants in an area ravaged by a hurricane to support migrating birds and build habitat for native animals and insects. Another was for restarting a series of small gardens that had been destroyed - including one for children. Some were for damage caused to public spaces or historic areas by tornadoes and their strong winds.

Thank you to the many states' natural disaster grant chairs and the state presidents. You have worked to get information to your clubs and members about applying and donating. Some states have created their own programs to fund parts of disaster recovery efforts that NGC does not. Thanks also to those of you who have asked questions. Sometimes, they lead me to a good thought. For example, if you know a garden club member in another state whom a natural disaster may have hit, tell them about this grant. Tell them to apply for it. Help them apply if necessary. We have money to give!

Debra Turner is the NGC's Natural Disaster USA Grant Chair. She is first vice president of the Garden Club of Ohio and a member of Creative Arrangers Guild and Pickaway County Garden Club. She and her husband Dave McCoy are both retired journalists who live in Lancaster, Ohio.

FREE TOOLS FOR GARDEN CLUBS

Debi Harrington

National Garden Club, Inc.'s grant program with the AMES Companies, Inc. began in 2014. The AMES Companies has generously agreed to extend its in-kind tool grant program for 2025. Garden clubs must **submit grant applications by 3/1/25**.



In 2025, AMES will gift garden tools with a total retail value of \$5,000 to NGC Member Clubs' gardening projects. Gardening projects performed and/or supported by NGC member clubs and scheduled through September 30, 2025, are eligible. Projects may be a joint venture with another organization; however, **the garden club applying must be a member of NGC and be involved in some aspect of the project**. Awarded tools will be shipped to the successful applicants in late April through mid-May, 2025.

Read about the application process on the NGC's [AMES Tool Grant](#) page. Select "Resources and Forms" to find the 2025 Grant Application Form and the 2025 Item (Tool) Selection Sheet. To apply, you must download both forms, save them, fill in the blanks, and save them again.

- On the 2025 Grant Application Form, do not leave any spaces blank. Double-check to ensure names, addresses, and phone numbers are correct. Under "Project Description, Garden Club/Outside Involvement, and Need for Tools," you can type more lines than what appears on the form - approximately 50/10/10.
- On the 2025 Item (Tool) Selection Sheet, you **must** fill out the club's name, ALL shipping information across the top, and the quantity of each tool desired in the white column. **DO NOT** choose more than \$250 total. The form will automatically total your selected items. **DO NOT** fill in the gray column on the right, which says "For NGC USE Only."
- When emailing your completed forms, **DO NOT** add additional project explanation pages or photos. **Sending any further information will automatically disqualify your club for the 2025 AMES Tools Grant year.**



Many AMES tools are appropriate for children and gardeners who prefer a cushion or ergonomic grip handle. **NEW for 2025** are three Floral Size Tools, which are lighter, slightly smaller, and perfect for raised and diminutive garden beds. Remember that clubs may only select tools up to a retail value of \$250 on the 2025 Tool Item Selection Sheet. Take advantage of this tremendous benefit of being an NGC garden club.

The AMES Tool Grant Committee considers the following criteria when choosing grant recipients: value of the project to the community, level of club member participation, need and planned use of the requested tools, uniqueness of the project. All winning clubs must deliver a final report no later than 45 days after project completion or by November 15, 2025. View the final report details on the [AMES Tool Grant page](#) under "Reporting by Winners."

Please note that an NGC club that applies for an AMES grant may also apply for an Espoma in-kind product and PLANT AMERICA grants. Each application period is different. Go to the [NGC Awards and Grants](#) page for details about all available NGC grants.

Debi Harrington, of New Mexico is the NGC Sponsors' Grant Chair. [Contact Debi](#) for more information on Ames or Espoma Grants.

Rosalia Garden Club, WA members plant in their community park with their 2024 AMES tools. • Rosalia Garden Club (Background • Prasertthai)



PLANT, GROW, AND SHARE WITH OTHERS IN NEED

Melinda Myers

Winter is a time when many of us begin planning for our next growing season. Consider planting an extra row or two to share with the food insecure in your community. Planting more and sharing it with others is a great way we, as gardeners, can make a difference. Plus, it is a great excuse to expand your garden or add a few more containers to your collection.

[Plant-A-Row for the Hungry](#) (PAR) started in 1995 as a public service program by GardenComm, formerly Garden Writers Association. This national program encourages gardeners to grow a little extra and donate the produce to local food programs serving the food insecure in their communities. What surprises most people is that food insecurity is everywhere. It affects families and individuals in every county in the United States. Feeding America, formerly Second Harvest, shared these 2023 statistics: 47 million people in the United States were food insecure, 14 million were children, and almost 7 million were seniors. More than 50 million people turned to food programs in 2023. Think about the difference garden-fresh produce can make in so many lives in your community.

If you are already planting and sharing produce with local food pantries, thanks. As an influencer in the world of gardening, please help spread the word and encourage others to do the same. Many people you meet are unaware that they can donate locally to churches, food pantries, and other programs in their community. Include this growing and giving opportunity in your outreach efforts whenever relevant. Consider reaching out to community garden groups, schools, and others growing gardens in your area. Many of these groups may already be growing and donating fresh vegetables, but some may not be aware of the need, and the difference they can make.

Visit [Feeding America](#)'s website to find places to donate fresh produce. Spend a bit of time doing your research on the best garden produce to grow and donate in your area. Although fresh produce is a welcome benefit, some programs have limited hours or little or no space or refrigeration to use and

store these donations. Coordinating what you grow and the timing of your donation helps increase the impact of your donation. Encourage gardeners to contact the food programs where you plan to donate as they begin planning their gardens.

Iowa State University surveyed its local food programs and prepared a list of the [Top 13 Vegetables](#) that were easy to grow, generally preferred by recipients, easy to store for several days, and used in various ways. These include tomatoes, zucchini, winter squash, potatoes, onions, peppers, cucumbers, melons, broccoli, cabbage, sweet potatoes, carrots, and beans. Only donate produce of the same high quality you prefer to eat. Those with limited space can plant a row or container of one or more vegetables to share. Other options include joining forces with a neighbor who may have the space but only limited time to garden or renting a community garden plot with friends. Both are great ways to grow fresh produce and share memories.

Gardeners who do not grow vegetables can still make a difference. Food programs are always looking for volunteers to help with gleaning projects. Staff and volunteers harvest leftover produce from cooperating farms and community gardens. You would be amazed at how much fruit and vegetables one can harvest before going to waste. Feeding America offers tips on how to get involved with gleaning efforts in your area: [Your Guide to Gleaning](#).

Get children involved in growing and giving. As gardeners, we know, and now research proves that gardening increases focus, decreases stress, and elevates our moods, including children. Giving also helps children grow into caring, well-rounded adults. Katie Stagliano, founder of [Katie's Krops](#), is a perfect example. She made her first donation at the age of nine and grew this passion and compassion into a national network of youth gardens. We all win when we work together doing something we love for someone in need.

Melinda Myers authored more than 20 gardening books, including *The Midwest Gardener's Handbook* and *Small Space Gardening*. Her website is www.MelindaMyers.com.



Gold Star Memorial, Ronald Reagan Presidential Library • ClaudineVM

PRESIDENTIAL LIBRARIES

Candace Wells

As dedicated advocates for honoring the sacrifices of our veterans and our nation’s history, I encourage our state clubs to prioritize the placement of Blue Star and Gold Star Families Memorial Markers at all Presidential Libraries, historical Presidential Residences, and National Cemeteries across the country.

Please inspire your state clubs to take an active role in establishing the presence of the NGC Blue Star and/or Gold Star Families Memorial Markers at the Presidential Libraries, National Cemeteries, and Historical Presidential Residences. Reflecting on the significance of these Presidential Libraries, each one celebrates the legacies of our nation’s leaders and represents the values we hold dear - values that our veterans have fought to uphold. The Presidential Libraries serve as vital repositories of our democratic heritage, representing the values, ideals, principles, and sacrifices that shape our democracy. This initiative honors our heroes and provides an educational resource for visitors, fostering a deeper understanding of the connection between our history and the sacrifices made for our freedoms.

The time to act is now. With each passing day, we miss opportunities to honor our heroes. With your leadership, we can galvanize our clubs to undertake crucial steps to bring this vision to life. Together, we can ensure that people recognize the stories of our veterans in these most historic places. By mobilizing your state clubs and communities to take swift action, we can establish Blue Star and Gold Star Families Memorial Markers that create a network of remembrance linking our past to our present. Let us harness our collective energy and commitment to ensure these Blue Star and Gold Star Families Memorial Markers come to fruition. Thank you for your leadership and dedication to this vital cause. I look forward to seeing the great strides and meaningful impact we can make together in honoring our veterans and enriching our national narrative.

[Candace Wells](#), of Tennessee, is the NGC Blue Star and Gold Star Families Memorial Marker Chair. **Note:** There is a 3% increase for historical marker orders placed in 2025. Sewah Studios assured me that they are keeping our prices close to 20% lower than the normal cost of their historical markers. Sewah Studios strives to be reasonable and respectful in our partnership with this honorary program.

Blue & Gold Star Memorial Marker Prices 1/1/2025 - 12/31/2025	
Marker, 7’ post, shipping	\$2,400
Marker, 10’ post, shipping	\$2,515
Byway Plaques	\$765
Replacement 7’ Posts	\$375
Replacement 10’ Post	\$475
Refurbishment	\$1,200
Refurbishment with Cap Repair	\$1,450
Extra Shipping (western states)	\$300



NGC President Brenda Moore and Carolyn Sitzes at O'Fallon Community Garden • Tanya Scherschel
Tour Images • Gerianne Holzman



CENTRAL REGION TOURS AWARD SITE

Tanya Scherschel

Heard at the recent Central Region Convention: “While state conventions and conferences are similar, the best part of all of them are the people,” said Central Region Director Lynne Ehnert. “It’s a time to reunite with current friends and take the opportunity to make new friends. With each gathering, people come back a little more invigorated with their projects and remember why they joined a garden club. New ideas are generated, new plans are made, new projects come to life, new teams are formed, and we all learn a little.” The convention attendees had the opportunity to tour the O’Fallon Garden Club (Illinois) Community Garden. The club received the 2023 Food Bank Donation Award from the National Garden Club. This award is given to clubs that donate the largest amount of fresh produce per capita to a local food bank. This year is the second consecutive year that the O’Fallon Garden Club has received this award, highlighting the organization’s overriding commitment to providing fresh, nutritious food to the community to help alleviate food insecurity.

“Since the beginning, having the vegetable garden has always been the club’s plan,” said Bob Winkler, chair of the O’Fallon Garden Club Community Garden. Winkler, who joined the club a year after its founding, expanded the original vegetable patch to increase its harvest. Later, he secured funding to build raised beds to safeguard the viability of crops against the adverse effects of climate change. Today, he and a team of volunteers work 40 hours a week from March to November to plant, weed, water, and harvest a cornucopia of fresh produce for their neighbors.

“We have 27 things that we do,” said Winkler. “We have beans, beets, blackberries, cabbage, cantaloupe, carrots, cucumbers, herbs, leafy greens, lettuce, okra, onions, peas, peppers, pumpkin, radishes, spinach, summer squash, sweet potatoes, tomatoes, watermelon, and winter squash.” Last year, the club donated 5,300 pounds to the O’Fallon Community Food Pantry, and as of September 2024, they donated 3,100 pounds. “From 2012 to 2024, we have donated 41,500 pounds of produce to the food pantry,” said Winkler.

“Each summer, the O’Fallon Community Food Pantry is blessed with a variety of fresh vegetables and fruit grown by the O’Fallon Garden Club,” said Larry Strube, the Pantry’s director. “For most of the year, the Pantry provides canned vegetables and fruit, so having a variety of fresh food in the summer has a big impact on our clients. When a client visits the Pantry, fresh vegetables are an addition to their normal order, so not only do they receive extra food in the summer, but it is also a healthy addition to their diet. So far this summer, we have served an average of 300 families each month, so it’s easy to see the impact that the O’Fallon Garden Club is making.”

Tanya Scherschel is the Publicity Chair for the O’Fallon Garden Club in O’Fallon, Illinois. She is a free lance writer.

ORNAMENTAL NATIVES

María Jesús Ramírez

South America is home to an incredible diversity of flora, including a vast range of native plants that stand out for their ornamental beauty and ecological value. These species beautify gardens and landscapes and play a fundamental role in local ecosystems, attracting pollinators and maintaining environmental balance.

Native ornamental plants have an advantage over exotic species. They are adapted to the climatic and soil conditions of their region, making them more resistant to local diseases and pests. Moreover, their cultivation promotes the conservation of native biodiversity because many are a source of food and shelter for insects, birds, and animals.

Three popular varieties in our region of Colonia, Uruguay, are:

- ***Bauhinia forficata***: a small to medium-sized tree (23 to 35 feet high) with a parasol-shaped canopy and thin bark. Simple, deciduous, bilobed leaves that resemble a cow's hoof, giving it its common name. It has curved thorns protruding from the leaf axils. Large white flowers that look like orchids are arranged in axillary or terminal clusters. The fruit is a bivalved, leathery, flat pod measuring 4 to 8 inches long. It blooms from late spring to mid-summer, yielding its fruits towards the end of summer. The pods hang from the branches, even without seeds, until June. It's a tree that doesn't cause root problems, making it a good option for small spaces or public settings.
- ***Lantana montevidensis***: a low shrub, no taller than 20 inches in height, very dense, with dark green non-deciduous foliage, of a rough texture, and pleasant fragrance. It blooms from spring to fall with a variety of flowers in shades of white, pink, and lilac. Due to its creeping growth, it is ideal as ground cover in flowerbeds, helping to retain moisture, prevent erosion, and suppress weed growth.
- ***Petunia axillaris***: a perennial herbaceous plant that reaches approximately 20 inches in height, with pubescent and slightly sticky stems. It blooms from spring to fall with brilliant white flowers that stand out for their brightness. This low-maintenance species prefers well-drained soils and full sun locations, making it ideal for adding a naturalistic or wild touch to gardens.

María Jesús Ramírez is a veterinarian with experience in regenerative grazing. She joined the Edelweiss Garden Club of Nueva Helvecia, Colonia, Uruguay in 2013. She is currently its president. María is pursuing a Landscape Technician degree at ORT University in Montevideo, Uruguay. [See more images of Ornamental Natives.](#)



Petunia axillaris • María Jesús Ramírez



NATIVAS ORNAMENTALES

María Jesús Ramírez

América del Sur es hogar de una increíble diversidad de flora, incluyendo una vasta gama de plantas nativas que destacan por su belleza ornamental y valor ecológico. Estas especies no solo embellecen jardines y paisajes, sino que también cumplen un papel fundamental en los ecosistemas locales, atrayendo polinizadores y manteniendo el equilibrio ambiental.

Las plantas ornamentales nativas tienen una ventaja sobre las especies exóticas: están adaptadas a las condiciones climáticas y del suelo de su región, lo que las hace más resistentes a enfermedades y plagas locales. Además, su cultivo promueve la conservación de la biodiversidad autóctona, ya que muchas de ellas son fuente de alimento y refugio para insectos, aves y otros animales.

Tres variedades populares en nuestra región de Colonia, Uruguay son:

- ***Bauhinia forficata***: Árbol de pequeño a mediano porte (7 a 12 m de altura), forma parasolada, corteza delgada. Hojas simples, caducas, bilobadas, asemeja a una pezuña de vaca dando su nombre vulgar. Presenta aguijones curvos en las axilas de las hojas. Flores grandes blancas, similar a las orquídeas, están dispuestas en racimos axilares o terminales. Fruto, legumbre bivalva, coriácea, chata, de 10 a 20 cm. Florece desde finales de la primavera hasta mediados del verano. Fructifica hacia el final del verano. Las vainas cuelgan de las ramas, ya sin semillas, hasta junio. Es un árbol que no genera problemas con las raíces siendo una buena opción para lugares pequeños u ornato público.
- ***Lantana montevidensis***: Arbusto bajo que alcanza hasta 40 cm de altura, muy ramificado, con follaje perenne de color verde oscuro, de textura rugosa y agradable aroma. Florece desde la primavera hasta el otoño, con variedades de flores en tonos blancos, rosados y lilas. Debido a su crecimiento rastrero, es ideal como cobertura de suelo en canteros, ayudando a mantener la humedad, prevenir la erosión y evitar el crecimiento de malezas.
- ***Petunia axillaris***: Planta herbácea perenne que alcanza aproximadamente 50 cm de altura, con tallos pubescentes y ligeramente viscosos. Florece de primavera a otoño, con flores blancas que destacan por su luminosidad. Esta especie de bajo mantenimiento prefiere suelos permeables y ubicaciones a pleno sol, siendo ideal para aportar un toque naturalista o silvestre a jardines.

María Jesús Ramírez es médica veterinaria, con experiencia en ganadería regenerativa. Se unió al Garden Club Edelweiss de Nueva Helvecia, Colonia, Uruguay en 2013 y actualmente es su presidenta. Al presente cursa la carrera de Técnico en Paisajismo en la Universidad ORT, Montevideo-Uruguay. [Ver más imágenes de Nativos Ornamentales.](#)



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NGC PATH IS A SUCCESS!

Mary Warshauer
Dinah Applebaum

Thank you to all of the members, state garden clubs, and regions for creating the *NGC Path of Success*. At the end of the first year of the campaign, you donated over \$100,000, reaching over 50% of our goal.

The Permanent Home and Endowment Trustees (PH&E) voted to continue the campaign, and your donations are welcome! Scan the upper right QR Code to buy a paver today.

Have you already bought a paver and want to see it without traveling to St. Louis? Scan the code accompanying the map on the lower right to view the pavers arranged by region, then state. (Note: more states may have purchased pavers since this map was published.) Thank YOU!

Mary Warshauer, of New Jersey, is the PH&E Director. Dinah Applebaum is an NGC Staff Member.

THANKFUL

NGC PATH OF SUCCESS UPDATE
NOVEMBER 2024

We thank all donors for their generosity

\$103,133 in raised funds	222 pavers	52% of goal reached

SCAN THE QR CODE TO BUY A PAVER!

● = States with State Pavers

SOWING THE SEED: REDUCE FOOD INSECURITY & INCREASE HEALTH BENEFITS

Lori Frederick



Engaging in outdoor activities correlates with multiple health benefits for all ages, and establishing and practicing these habits can be life-altering. Teaching youth basic gardening skills has a positive influence by making interpersonal connections. It also introduces science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) concepts while teaching life skills and creating healthy habits. Research shows that young people who garden benefit in their physical and mental health and can increase food security for their families.

Healthy Eating Habits

According to the United States Department of Agriculture's MyPlate food guide, half of a child's plate should be fruits and vegetables. However, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in 2017 showed alarming statistics that only 2% of high school students met the recommended vegetable intake nationwide. Increasing the availability of youth gardening programs or domestic horticulture brings significant potential for positive habit change. Studies found that youth involved in hands-on gardening activities and programs are likelier to choose fruits and vegetables as snack options and increase their consumption of these items at mealtimes. Youth are more likely to taste new foods and broaden the variety of what they are willing to taste if they take ownership in the growing process and harvest of the vegetables they cultivate. Growing crops and harvesting vegetables are also directly connected with preparing food at home versus eating out at fast food chains or restaurants. Home cooking allows more control over portion sizes, additives, additional preservatives, hormones, and the cooking methods used to prepare the food. Early establishment of healthy eating habits helps prevent higher calorie, sugar, and sodium intake and lower consumption of beneficial nutrients, eventually leading to obesity, diabetes, and cardiovascular diseases.

Physical Health

Not only does gardening increase healthy eating habits, but it has a significant relationship with decreasing obesity through physical activity. A day of gardening can surprisingly work all the muscle groups and burn excess calories! Muscles and joints are constantly working as gardeners stretch, lift, dig, shovel, and bend. Participating in these activities will also help improve balance, flexibility, and strength. Sensory development expands by stimulating all five senses, whether through seeing colorful flowers, smelling the fragrance of fresh herbs, touching various textures, tasting fresh produce, or listening to nature around them. Motor skills improve by actively working on the tasks in the garden, whether it is a raised bed, traditional bed, or even a container garden. Gardeners use small and exact movements while planting and weeding, making holes with their fingers, using tools, and learning to sow seeds at the proper depth. Weeding, watering, and sowing give many opportunities to improve and retain locomotor skills in the hands and arms.

(Continued on page 32)



Food Security • Milena Khosroshvili

Mental Health

Gardening links to life longevity due to the abundance of benefits it has on the mind and body. Gardening cultivates emotional well-being, creativity, patience, and interpersonal skills, which are beneficial to learn at a young age. Incorporating techniques and skills while gardening can improve focus and memory and minimize stress and anxiety. A sense of accomplishment leads to increased self-esteem, stimulating motivation to take on new challenges, build resilience, and help navigate life with greater purpose and satisfaction.

Learning

Youth can develop environmental awareness and analytical skills through gardening, which reinforces STEM education through basic or advanced topics in an unconventional way. Gardening methods such as vertical gardening, hydroponics, aquaponics, or even the incorporation of Hügelkultur allow youth to use critical thinking skills while analyzing the information more rigorously. Planning and choosing a garden location, composting, correctly watering plants while controlling diseases and insects, and knowing when to harvest are all crucial factors that can be taught at various stages and complexities to maximize the learner's comprehension.

Food Security

Today's youth can grow their own fruit and vegetables, which increases food security and provides them with healthier produce options for themselves and their families. Young individuals can foster a sense of community by sharing the abundance of produce with neighboring families, donating items to community food pantry locations to help serve other vulnerable populations, and empowering them to teach others about growing food. Healthy eating habits can start at a young age while cultivating opportunities for nutritional education for others. Adolescents can grow produce on a small scale by learning to use grow bags, getting involved in community or school gardens, or partaking in outdoor educational community programs. Gardening also reinforces food sovereignty by teaching basic skills and knowledge of protecting natural resources, aiding in local control about what food is produced in the area, and supporting others to end hunger.

Summary

Providing outdoor activities and promoting healthy behaviors such as gardening is truly sowing the seed to reduce food insecurity and increase health benefits in youth. These behaviors are essential to learning early in life to help prevent obesity and heart disease while strengthening family relationships, stimulating cognitive health, and supporting physiological well-being. The majority of adults in America are classified as overweight, with many falling into the obese category. Obesity rates among youth continue to rise. Investing in youth and teaching basic concepts to provide healthy and nutritious foods for themselves is essential for building a healthier future, empowering them to make informed choices, and fostering lifelong habits that support well-being and resilience.

Lori Frederick earned a Bachelor's in Family Consumer Science from Stephen F. Austin State University and a Master's in Curriculum and Instruction from the University of Texas at Tyler. Over the past 9 years, she taught in Title I schools and now serves as an extension agent in Nacogdoches, Texas.

NOT A JUDGE?

You can still attend a Symposium.

Lynn Fronk

Why would you want to attend a Symposium if you are not a Judge? A symposium provides opportunities for Accredited Judges to refresh their knowledge of judging procedures in all NGC Flower Show divisions and remain in good standing. Instructors challenge participants to explore advanced studies and promote a higher level of competency using proper exhibiting and judging techniques. Symposia provide learning opportunities in the latest design and horticulture techniques for **all garden club members** interested in NGC Flower Shows, Horticulture, and Design. You do not have to be a judge to attend and learn.

If horticulture is your main interest, learn the newest cultivars. Learn new techniques with horticulture specimens. Learn what judges look for when they evaluate entries. See top-notch specimens of horticulture and how to find them. Instructors provide information on a particular type of plant that might catch your eye and add to your collection. Horticulture instructors will tell you the ease or difficulty of growing each plant studied. They also explain how to exhibit each plant type.

If design is your main interest, instructors will show you how to construct the designs in the *Handbook for Flower Shows*. Learn what these designs are and the requirements for each design type. Spark your creativity, and learn what design instructors use as creative tools. Instructors also review different components used in design and many new design techniques.

If you are new to flower shows and want to learn more about their requirements, symposia can help you. The Allied Topics offered include specific areas of flower shows, like Botanical Arts, Education, and Youth Divisions.

Go to the [NGC Symposium](#) webpage for more information. Nationwide symposia are on the [NGC Symposium Course](#) webpage. Courses are listed by month and location. Most symposia are two or three days, with four hours each in design and horticulture and two hours of allied topics.

Lynn Fronk, of Georgia, is an NGC Design Instructor and the Symposium Coordinator. She is also a member of the Floral Design Committee.



Julia Clevett Design • Gerianne Holzman



Dorothy Howatt Display • Gerianne Holzman



Julia Clevett Design • Gerianne Holzman

Winter is a great time for growing fruits and vegetables. You can order indoor fruit trees from a nursery that bloom and thrive in the winter or grow your own trees from seeds. Those in the Deep South can produce some of the listed fruits outdoors.

You may plant most of the vegetables on the list outdoors or in a greenhouse. Keep this list handy if you decide to do some winter gardening, and you will be surprised by how easy and rewarding this is.

Another great winter activity is reading gardening catalogs and ordering your plants and seeds for your spring garden. Also, this is a perfect time to take a virtual [NGC Gardening School](#).

Sarah McReynolds, of Texas, is the NGC Gardening School Chair and the South Central Region Director.



Veggies • Brebca
Background • Mirodrag Kiranovic

Fruits	Vegetables	
apples	allium bulbs	chicory
clementines	avocado	collard greens
grapefruit	beets	garlic
kiwi	bok choy	kale
kumquats	broccoli/rabe	leeks
lemon	brussels sprouts	onions
oranges	cabbage	mustard greens
pears	carrots	shallots
persimmons	cauliflower	squash
tangerines	celery	turnips
Passionfruit	fennel	
pomegranate		
pomelo		

CALLING YOUNG ARTISTS!

Terry Critchlow & Bob Markey

NGC welcomes young artists to enter our Youth Sculpture and Poster Contests. See the [NGC Youth Contests and Activities](#) webpage for more details or contact [Terry Critchlow](#), Chair.

NGC 2025 YOUTH SCULPTURE CONTEST

SAVE THE ENVIRONMENT TO KEEP OUR PLANET GREEN

WHO'S ELIGIBLE?

Grade 4 – Grade 8
General Education, Special Education or English for Speakers of Other Languages
who are either
NGC Youth Club members or
ANY kid when sponsored by a local affiliated NGC garden club

For details go to
www.gardenclub.org
 Youth & Scholarship/Contest & Activities
 OR your state garden club's website!

CLUB ENTRIES MUST BE SENT TO YOUR STATE YOUTH CHAIRPERSON: OBSERVE YOUR STATE DEADLINE

For more information email:
 Terry Critchlow
 NGC Sculpture Contest Chairperson

PREVIOUS winners!





NGC 2025 SMOKEY BEAR/WOODY OWL POSTER CONTEST

This annual contest is open to all kids from Grade 1 - Grade 5 who are members of NGC Youth Clubs or Elementary Schools, Scout Groups & Youth Groups **only if sponsored by an affiliated garden club!**

For details go to
www.gardenclub.org
 Youth & Scholarship/Contest & Activities
 OR your state garden club's website!

CLUB ENTRIES MUST BE SENT TO YOUR STATE YOUTH CHAIRPERSON: OBSERVE YOUR STATE DEADLINE

For more information email:
 Terry Critchlow, NGC Youth Poster Contest Chairman





Playing with Light

A Magical Element in Design

Pilar Medellín de Miñaro

Definition: LIGHT - It is the illumination necessary for vision. The game is to experiment, to venture, to have fun, observing how the use of light transforms a design. As an element, it affects almost all the remaining design elements. Light is the source of all colors; there is no color without light. Light affects the apparent depth in a design, causing eye movement. It changes the colors and appearance of the components. It modifies the shapes and enriches the textures.

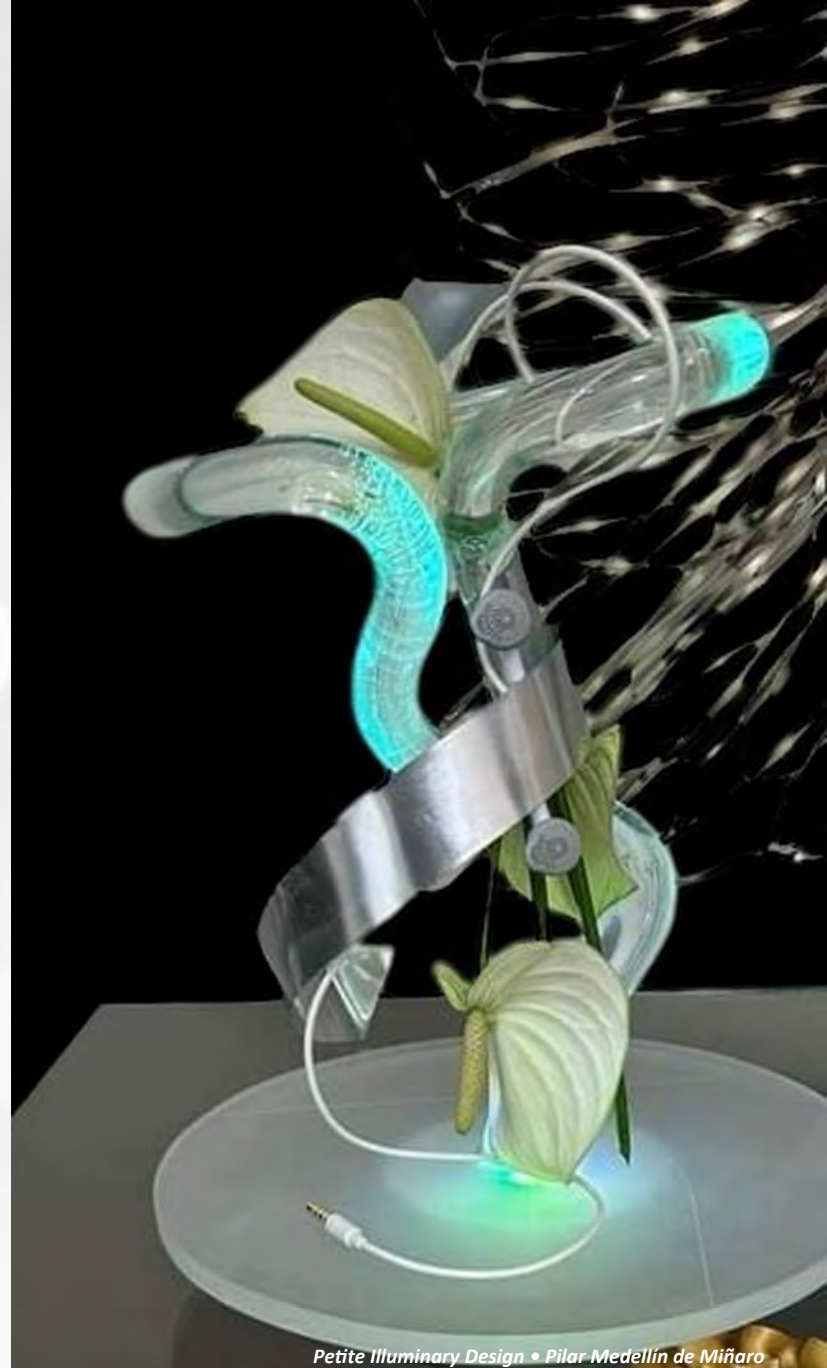
Types of Light:

- ⇒ **Natural** - Sunlight contains the spectrum of all colors. The colors that we see in sunlight are natural. We almost never expose our designs to sunlight; however, it is ideal in Virtual Exhibitions.
- ⇒ **Artificial or Produced Lighting** – Incandescent is cold or warm/yellow light. Fluorescent, halogen, and LED lighting, according to their intensity, can considerably vary the size and color of the components of a Design.
- ⇒ **Integrated into the Design** - Illuminary Design.

Light is the essence of visual perception. How light interacts with objects and how shadows are formed and cast defines everything we see. In design, this interaction is fundamental to create volume, depth, and atmosphere.

Light as narrative can have a powerful effect. It can direct the viewer's eye to a focal point, highlight important elements, and even establish expression in the design. Experimenting with different light sources can open up a world of creativity in your art. Natural light provides a sense of authenticity and warmth, while artificial light can create dramatic and mysterious environments. Explore playing with all the possibilities in your next design!

Pilar Medellín de Miñaro, is a TNG international feature writer and NGC Instructor. She lives in Mexico. [View more information on the Design Element of Light.](#)



Petite Illuminary Design • Pilar Medellín de Miñaro



Jugando con la Luz

Elemento Mágico en el Diseño Pilar Medellín de Miñaro

Definición: LUZ - Es la iluminación necesaria para la visión. El juego es experimentar, aventurarse, divertirse, observando, cómo el uso de la luz transforma un diseño. Como elemento, incide en casi todos los elementos restantes. La luz es la fuente de todos los colores, no existe color sin luz. La luz afecta la profundidad aparente en un Diseño, provocando movimiento ocular. Cambia los colores y el aspecto de los componentes. Modifica las formas, enriquece las texturas.

Tipos de Luz:

- ⇒ **Natural** - La luz solar contiene el espectro de todos los colores. Los colores que vemos a la luz del sol son los colores naturales. Casi nunca exponemos nuestros diseños a la luz del sol, pero es ideal en Exposiciones Virtuales.
- ⇒ **Artificial o luz producida** - Luz incandescente/fría, cálida/amarilla. Luz fluorescente, halógena o LED, de acuerdo con su intensidad, varían considerablemente el tamaño y el color de los componentes del Diseño.
- ⇒ **Integrada al Diseño** - Diseño Lumínico.

La luz, es la esencia de la percepción visual. La forma en que la luz interactúa con los objetos y cómo las sombras se forman y proyectan, define todo lo que vemos. En el diseño, esta interacción es fundamental para crear volumen, profundidad y atmósfera.

La luz como narrativa puede tener un poderoso efecto. Puede dirigir la mirada del espectador a un punto focal, destacar elementos importantes, incluso establecer expresión en el diseño. La experimentación con diferentes fuentes de luz puede abrir un mundo de creatividad en tu arte. La luz natural proporciona una sensación de autenticidad y calidez, mientras que la luz artificial puede crear ambientes dramáticos y misteriosos. ¡Explora en tu próximo diseño, jugando con todas las posibilidades!

Pilar Medellín de Miñarro, es escritora internacional de artículos especiales para TNG e Instructora NGC. Ella vive en México. [Ver más información sobre el Elemento de Diseño de Luz.](#)



Profundidad de Efectos de Luz • Pilar Medellín de Miñaro



SAVING THE HERITAGE MUM

MOTHER-DAUGHTER TRIO PRESERVE MUMS IN THE SHENANDOAH VALLEY OF VIRGINIA

Nestled between the Allegheny and Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia sets Harmony Harvest Farm, a cut flower farm owned by two sisters and their mom. While the farm grows various flowers throughout the season, one signature crop holds its heart - the heritage chrysanthemum (also known as the heirloom mum.) The family's love affair with the mums started over 10 years ago with a collection of 40 varieties, which has now grown to nearly 250 rare breeds.



Working with growers across the country, Harmony Harvest Farm is on a mission to preserve the long-lost varieties that have long disappeared from garden centers. Each year, the farm releases a unique selection of plants available for sale on its website, hosts virtual events and offers a growing course to help its fellow green thumbs thrive. The girls hope that by filling flower beds across the country with these nostalgic plants, they can save the heritage chrysanthemums for generations to come.

Save 10% with coupon code
GARDEN10

To learn more about their mission and explore their mum collection, visit them online at hhfshop.com.





ARTISTRY IN BLOOM

Michelle Ovans

Paeonia 'Guardian of the Monastery' • Michelle Ovans

When sunshine warms the soil from its wintery rest and the landscape fills with peony petals fluttering in the breeze, we recall the beauty and traditions passed down from previous generations. People have grown peonies in gardens for over 3,000 years. Fossil records suggest that these stunning flowers have graced the Earth since 1900 BCE, making them one of the oldest flowering plants. Europeans used the root, bark, seeds, and flowers for medicinal uses. Ancient Greece provides us with two myths of the first known written flower, the peony. The God of Medicine, Asclepius, threatened to kill Paeon out of jealousy because he had excelled beyond his teacher's abilities. Zeus saved him by turning him into a beautiful red peony. Another myth links the name Peony back to a nymph named Paeonia whose beauty attracted Apollo's attention, giving us the Latin name *Paeonia*.

The original wild peonies are species native to the mountains and grasslands of Europe and Asia. All woody peony species and the most common garden peony come from China. Species have one or two rows of petals and have both female (carpels) and male (stamens) reproductive parts. The artistry in bloom we see in today's elegant blossoms comes from centuries of human-assisted crosses between and within species. Newly developed peonies range through the full spectrum of color combinations. Stems can hold blooms up to 10 inches in diameter above the foliage without draping to

the ground in the rain. Even in our lifetimes, the blooming colors, styles, and landscape qualities have changed far beyond what our parents and grandparents experienced.

Since 1974, the American Peony Society (APS) has served as the International Cultivar Registration Authority for Peonies. The APS officially recognizes and registers newly hybridized peonies. Annually, the APS also awards the "Gold Medal" for a peony exhibiting outstanding floral qualities and the "Award of Landscape Merit" to peony cultivars chosen for superior ornamental value and overall appearance in the landscape throughout the growing season.

The APS holds its annual National Peony Flower Show in different states. Peony enthusiasts and hybridizers from across the United States and Canada bring blooms to fill the showroom floor with thousands of pristine peony blossoms for judging. The show is in Beaver Dam, Wisconsin, June 14-15 this year. It is free and open to the public. Exhibitors are thrilled to share moments of bliss with you as you discover hundreds of varieties of peonies in full bloom, many bearing fragrances to fill all your senses. Visit the [American Peony Society](#) website for more details about award-winning peonies and the 2025 National Peony Flower Show – *Artistry in Bloom*.

Michelle Ovans owns Ovans Peony Farm in Wisconsin and is the Wisconsin Peony Society President.

DISCOVERING HITCHIN LAVENDER María Noel Castro



Honeybee Pollinators • Robin Gil

Discovering a lavender field in England is a magical experience that captivates the senses. The fields at Hitchin Lavender are filled with vibrant purple hues that stretch as far as the eye can see, creating a breathtaking landscape.

Walking through the rows of lavender is an enchanting experience, with the air filled with a sweet, refreshing fragrance that instantly captivates the senses. Each lavender variety offers its own distinct aroma, turning the journey through the field into a rich, sensory adventure. The vibrant purple blossoms in full bloom create a stunning visual display, a spectacle that lingers in memory long after the visit. This combination of fragrant air and striking colors makes exploring the lavender fields an unforgettable and immersive experience.

The lavender fields are more than just a visual and aromatic delight; they are a thriving haven for wildlife. As you explore the fields, you will notice a variety of insects, including butterflies fluttering about and bees busily feeding on the nectar. The abundance of pollinators plays a vital role in maintaining the ecosystem's natural balance. Birds also make their home in the area, nesting among the fields and contributing to the vibrant, interconnected web of life. This rich biodiversity highlights the fields' importance as a sanctuary for wildlife, creating a habitat where nature flourishes.

By expanding their wildflower and sunflower fields this year, Hitchin Lavender fosters a more diverse and abundant

environment for pollen and nectar. These resources are crucial for sustaining bees and other pollinating insects, which play an essential role in ecosystem health and food production. This initiative also led to the installation of their first natural Bee Kind Hive, crafted from western red cedar wood.

The Bee Kind Hive is designed to provide a more bee-friendly habitat, reducing stress on the bees while supporting their natural role as vital pollinators. By offering this harmonious space, Hitchin Lavender enhances the well-being of local bee populations and contributes to the broader preservation of ecosystems and biodiversity, addressing the critical decline in bee and insect numbers.

For nature lovers, Hitchin Lavender presents an ideal blend of scenic beauty, biodiversity, and an opportunity to connect with the environment, making it a remarkable and memorable experience.

[Hitchin Lavender](#): Cadwell Farm, Hitchin, Hertfordshire, Bee Kind Hive UK

María Noel Castro is the daughter of Noelia Inés Cestari, a member of the Carmen de Areco Group of the Garden Club Argentino. Over 24 years ago, when María Noel travelled to England to perfect her English, she met and betrothed Timothy Hunter. Although the land has been in the family for over 100 years, Timothy's parents, Zoë and Alec Hunter planted the lavender fields in 2000. At first, they began to market the natural oils; however, over the years, with the emergence of social platforms, it has become the breathtaking tourist attraction it is today. **See more images of [Hitchin Lavender](#).**

DESCUBRIENDO HITCHIN LAVENDER María Noel Castro

Swallow Over Lavender Fields • Robin Gil

Descubrir un campo de lavanda en Inglaterra es una experiencia mágica que cautiva los sentidos. Campos, como los de Hitchin Lavender, están llenos de vibrantes tonos morados que se extienden hasta donde alcanza la vista, creando un paisaje impresionante.

Al caminar entre las hileras de lavanda, el aire se impregna de su fragancia dulce y refrescante. Cada variedad tiene un aroma único, lo que hace que explorar el campo sea una experiencia sensorial enriquecedora. Además, la vista de las flores en plena floración es un espectáculo visual que no se olvida fácilmente.

Los campos de lavanda no solo son un festín para los ojos y el olfato, sino que también son un refugio para la fauna. Al observar, es posible ver una gran variedad de insectos, como mariposas y, por supuesto, abejas, que se alimentan del néctar. También se pueden avistar aves que anidan en la zona, creando un ecosistema enriquecedor.

Al extender este año sus campos de flores silvestres y girasoles, Hitchin Lavender está facilitando la creación de un entorno mucho más rico en polen y néctar, lo cual es vital para el sustento de abejas y otros insectos polinizadores. Esta iniciativa los llevó a la instalación de su primera colmena natural Bee Kind, elaborada con madera de cedro rojo occidental.

La colmena Bee Kind está diseñada para proporcionar un hábitat más amigable para las abejas, reduciendo así su estrés y contribuyendo a su rol natural como polinizadoras vitales. Al proporcionar este entorno armonioso, Hitchin Lavender mejora el bienestar de las poblaciones locales de abejas, y también contribuye a una preservación más amplia de los ecosistemas, esenciales para fomentar la biodiversidad, encarando la disminución crítica del número de abejas e insectos.

Para los amantes de la naturaleza, Hitchin Lavender presenta una combinación ideal de belleza escénica, biodiversidad y la oportunidad de conectarse con el medio ambiente, ofreciendo una experiencia singular y memorable.

[Hitchin Lavender](#): Cadwell Farm, Hitchin, Hertfordshire, Bee Kind Hive UK

María Noel Castro es hija de Noelia Inés Cestari, integrante del Grupo Carmen de Areco del Garden Club Argentino. Hace más de 24 años, cuando María Noel viajó a Inglaterra para perfeccionar su inglés, conoció y se comprometió con Timothy Hunter. Aunque la tierra ha pertenecido a la familia durante más de 100 años los padres de Timothy, Zoë y Alec Hunter, plantaron los campos con lavanda en el año 2000. Al principio, comenzaron a comercializar los aceites naturales, sin embargo con el paso de los años y la aparición de las plataformas sociales, se ha convertido en la asombrosa atracción turística que es hoy. **Ver más imágenes de [Hitchin Lavender](#).**



Congrats • VJom

PLANT AMERICA COMMUNITY GRANTS AWARDED

David Robson

Congratulations to the 2025 recipients of the PLANT AMERICA Community Project Grants. Close to \$50,000 has been awarded for projects ranging from landscaping to community gardens to pollinator gardens. Grants ranged from \$300 to \$2,000. Look for the 2026 application on the NGC website after June 1, 2025. Thank you for supporting your communities and the [PLANT AMERICA Community Projects Grant](#) program.

[David Robson](#), of Illinois, chairs the PLANT AMERICA Community Project Grants Committee.

Blue Star GC	Garden Club of Alabama	Weeders and Seeders GC of Ligonier	Federation Garden Club of Maryland
Magnolia Springs GC	Garden Club of Alabama	Sudbury GC	Garden Club Federation of Massachusetts
Ripon GC	California Garden Clubs	Bay Springs GC	Garden Clubs of Mississippi
Fort Lauderdale	Florida Federation of Garden Clubs	Hernando GC	Garden Clubs of Mississippi
Moringa Circle of Fort Lauderdale GC	Florida Federation of Garden Clubs	Rolling Fork GC	Garden Clubs of Mississippi
Azalea GC of Columbus	Georgia Garden Club	Maryville GC	Federated Garden Clubs of Missouri
Greensboro GC	Georgia Garden Club	Hillsborough GC	Garden Club of North Carolina
Spade and Trowel GC	Georgia Garden Club	GC of Yorktown	Federated Garden Clubs of New York State
Bloomington-Normal GC	Garden Clubs of Illinois	Northview Buckeye GC	Garden Club of Ohio
Bull Valley GC	Garden Clubs of Illinois	Tulsa GC	Oklahoma Garden Clubs
Boone County GC	Garden Club of Kentucky	GC of Forest Hills	Garden Club Federation of Pennsylvania
Washington GC	Louisiana Garden Club Federation	Green Gardeners of Fayette Ct.	Garden Club Federation of Pennsylvania
Evergreen GC	Federated Garden Club of Maryland	Orangeburg Council GC	Garden Club of South Carolina

Let's COOK!

CRANBERRY COFFEE CAKE

Mary Ann Ferguson-Rich

Cranberries are plentiful during the holiday season and freeze beautifully all winter. Brighten up your January with this Cranberry Coffee Cake recipe.

Ingredients:

Cake

- 1 ¼ cups sifted all-purpose flour
- ½ cup sifted granulated sugar
- 1 ½ teaspoon baking powder
- ¼ tsp. salt
- 4 tablespoons butter
- 1 egg, slightly beaten
- 3 tablespoons milk
- 1 tsp. vanilla
- 1 ½ cups fresh cranberries chopped or whole

Topping

- ½ cup flour
- ½ cup brown sugar
- ½ tsp. ground cinnamon
- 4 tablespoons butter

Preheat oven to 350°F. Sift together the 1 ¼ cups flour, granulated sugar, baking powder, and salt. Cut the first four tablespoons of butter into the flour mixture until the mixture resembles coarse crumbs. Combine egg, milk, and vanilla. Add to the dry ingredients and mix well. Spread in a greased 8 x 8 x 2-inch baking pan, then spoon the cranberries over the batter. Combine the ½ cup flour, brown sugar, and cinnamon. Cut the remaining four tablespoons of butter into the flour mixture until the mixture resembles coarse crumbs. Sprinkle over cranberries.

Bake at 350 degrees for 45 to 50 minutes.

Mary Ann Ferguson-Rich is the NGC Food to Table Chair. She cooks and gardens in Ohio. [Click here for printable Cranberry Coffee Cake recipe.](#)



C C L O U M B P S E T E

Sue Conat



We are all familiar with flower shows. Horticulture and design, sure. Educational exhibits and maybe some botanical arts? Check. But how many shows have you been to that include club competitions? We are lucky here in Southwest Michigan to enjoy membership in the Kalamazoo Garden Council, a group of eight clubs and one arrangers' guild. So, it is no surprise that our clubs LOVE a little competition!

Last fall, the Council held a flower show, *Autumn's Bounty*. Our club competition was titled *The Farmer's Bounty*. The schedule required entrants to create a functional outdoor vignette to suggest a roadside stand that may include flowers, fruits, vegetables, or other plant materials (cut or container grown) reminiscent of those sold or displayed at rural market stands. The space allotted for each vignette was 6 feet wide by 4 feet deep. The flower show committee furnished a wooden backdrop for each exhibit made of slatted wooden doors. Club competition entries must always be the work of more than one person. Each club that entered had four or more member teams involved in the planning and execution. Seeing the comradery and cooperation within the clubs was fun as they built lovely farmstands! The winner was the Club of Little Gardens of Three Rivers, Michigan - shown above right. Consider a club competition when you dream up your next flower show. You may be surprised at the beautiful results.

Sue Conat is a member of the Kalamazoo Garen Club, Michigan. Photos by Andrea Stork of the Petal Pushers Garden Club, Michigan.





PLANT FOR POLLINATORS

Virginia Schmidt

As we wind down 2024, we have received 466 applications to the PLANT AMERICA: Certified Pollinator Garden program since its rollout in late 2023. It is gratifying to know that so many NGC members have made their gardens friendly and inviting to bees, butterflies, and other insects. After all, if we do not have insects, we will not have people! Among the applications, some have stood out as examples that we can learn from to attract and support pollinators.

Marcia Carsten lives in Hudson, Ohio, on a one-acre suburban lot at the edge of a wet woods. She is a Xerces Society Ambassador and is an active member of Friends of Hudson Parks. Marcia wanted to have an **active** garden where she could see pollinators feeding, raising their young, and even sleeping. She accomplished this by selecting native plants. Marcia knows that we need more natural areas in our communities. "This is my way of doing what I can in my world," says Marcia. "We can get overwhelmed hearing about climate change, but my garden is something that I have control over." She says that native plants are beautiful and can survive swings in the weather because of their deep roots. Marcia adds, "There are approximately 500 species of native bees in Ohio, and most people have only seen a few. Bees are interested in plants, not you. Most stings are from wasps, not bees." The leafcutter bee, which Marcia described as "adorable," nests in hollow stems. She has created a habitat for them and watches the action from her front porch.

We received a standout application from Steve Matravers, who lives on about three-quarters of an acre in Batavia, Illinois. Steve is a Board-Certified Master Arborist and serves on his community's Natural Resource Committee. He has a large native area by his rear lot line, a rain garden in front, an area just for short plants, and a patch of zinnias for his wife. Steve recently hosted his garden club's weekly garden tour. He had all his native plants labeled, which generated many questions about the plants. He encourages his neighbors to plant natives and has harvested and donated seeds to fill a nearby unused area. One way Steve's garden has expanded is by purchasing an unusual plant. He says, "I bought something that needed a wet area, so I created a rain garden to fit the plant." Steve believes garden clubs should promote natives by having them available at plant sales. He supports other clubs' and organizations' plant sales to help them financially and encourage the use of natives. In Steve's professional life as an arborist, he helps people recognize native trees in their landscapes. "They may have a redbud tree, a silver maple.... I let them know that they are already using native plants. And then maybe they will think about what more they can do."

Thank you to Marcia and Steve for sharing their insight! And as Steve says, "What more can you do in your garden to make it more pollinator-friendly?"

Virginia Schmidt, of Ohio, is the PLANT AMERICA: Plant for Pollinators Chair. Apply to [Certify your Garden for Pollinators](#)



Bee Visitor • Marcia Carsten



Spiderwort • Steve Matravers



Augachlora pura Bee on Aster • Marcia Carsten



Rattlesnake Master • Steve Matravers



Honeycomb • Vanessa



Opossum • Mtruchon

WELCOME OPOSSUMS!

Bonnie Riggins

I am thankful to have many opossums in my neighborhood because they are highly beneficial for human gardeners. They are docile, nonaggressive, will not harm pets, and rarely carry rabies. The opossum is known as "Nature's Little Sanitation Engineer" per the Opossum Society of the United States. If people eliminated them from an area, the rats and other pests would proliferate. They help gardeners by feasting on ticks, slugs, snails, beetles, cockroaches, crickets, snakes, mice, and rats. They are attracted by water availability, pet food left out, and overripe, rotting fruit fallen from trees.

Opossums are North America's only marsupial (pouched mammal) and are identified by a white face and sharp teeth. They are also native to South America, along with the only other marsupial native to the western hemisphere, the shrew opossum. (**Possums** are marsupials native to Australia and some neighboring countries.) They are both related to the kangaroo and the koala.

Opossums are born after an 11-13 day gestation period and are so small that 20 can fit into a teaspoon. They stay inside the mother's pouch to nurse and develop. When her pouch becomes full, the juveniles ride on their mother's back until they are old enough to go out alone. Their short lifespan of up to two years is due to many predators, including dogs, cats, and humans.

Opossums are nocturnal, sleeping during the day and foraging at night. They prefer to sleep in dark, secluded places. They are also transient, staying only two or three days in the same den. They keep a consistent hunting route and may be seen at the same time each night, which lends to the misconception that they are living in your yard.

Opossums are docile and nonaggressive. They will not attack your pets unprovoked. Instead, they prefer to escape and avoid confrontations. In a face-off with a pet, they are much more likely to "play dead" to avoid conflict altogether. Dogs are far more dangerous to opossums than the reverse. The chance of rabies in an opossum is EXTREMELY RARE. The

opossum's low body temperature of 94 - 97° F makes it problematic for the virus to survive in its body.

Opossums have soft, delicate hands with nails that are easily ripped out and incapable of doing much digging or scratching. If you see holes in your roof or yard, a different type of animal most likely causes the problem. Opossums make few sounds. You may hear a "choo-choo" or a sneezing sound. These are made by the young when separated from their mother. The mother makes clicking sounds with her tongue to respond to the calls made by the young. Male opossums will make the same clicking sound primarily during mating season. When something threatens an opossum, it may growl or hiss.

Opossums cannot control when they "play dead." It is a defense mechanism against predators triggered by stress and fright. It lays on its side, becomes stiff, eyes glaze over, it drools, tongue lolls out, and green anal fluid may discharge. It will not respond to prodding or poking. Many predators give up the attack if they believe the opossum is dead. When the opossum is about to recover, the ears move very slightly.

Many opossums become orphaned if their mother dies or they fall off her back. If not injured, it is best to leave it alone if it is at least 7 inches long from nose to rump. Otherwise, contact a wildlife rehabilitator to rescue the orphaned opossum. If you see an obviously dead female opossum and detect movement in the pouch area, have the body and infants transported to the nearest wildlife rehabilitator or veterinarian for aid.

Hopefully, this information has helped you to think of the opossum as your free gardener! Source information for this article is courtesy of the [Opossum Society of the United States \(OSUS\)](#).

Bonnie Riggins is a member of the Garden Club of St. Petersburg, Florida. She has found and rescued several baby opossums and happily welcome them into her garden. Bonnie states, "They don't play dead around us so I think they welcome us into their family."



Food Donation • Lakshmi Prasad S

It is winter, and those who live in cold climates have put their gardens to bed for the season. But for those who live in the south, far southwest, and west, you may still have something growing in your vegetable garden or on fruit trees to share with others. If so, I hope you consider donating to your local food pantry, soup kitchen, or any other organization that helps feed those who are hungry.

By the end of NGC President Brenda Moore's term in May 2025, I would LOVE to say that all 50 state garden club federations and the National Capitol Area have participated in our *PLANT AMERICA, Feed America* project. But right now, that is not the case. And surprisingly, a few of the states that have not participated are in areas that can probably produce something in their vegetable gardens year-round. For the states I have not heard from, I will reach out to your state presidents once again to encourage them to promote this worthy project to their clubs. It is not too late to participate.

When I submitted my fall column in August, the total pounds donated and reported to me totaled 38,645.6. Since then, some states have had a BANNER production year in their gardens, and the total is now 101,345.6 pounds donated! This incredible increase is primarily due to clubs of the Michigan Garden Clubs. One club reported a donation of 52,000 pounds of produce grown, harvested, and donated from the Phoenix Community Farm. WOW! The recipient of this bountiful harvest was the Care Giving Network of Midland, Michigan. Other clubs, as well, have donated more than 1,000 pounds during the growing season to local community groups.

If you have volunteered at a community garden, please complete the donation form on the [PLANT AMERICA, Feed America](#) webpage. Even if you do not have your own garden, you may report what has been grown at your community garden if you volunteer there. And finally, thanks to all the individual gardeners who continue to complete donation forms. Many of you have written to me as a follow-up to tell me about your growing season. I even heard from a California member who donated pomegranates and has passed along a recipe to me! Thanks, and blessings to all of you in this new year for helping feed the hungry across America.

[Suzanne Bushnell](#) is the PLANT AMERICA, Feed America President's Project Chairman, and the NGC Community Garden Chair. She gardens on the coast of Maine.



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NGC SCHOOLS

Over the last several months, we have been working extremely hard on the discovery phase of the new NGC School Online Portal. We first met with the individual School chairman to better understand the needs and opportunities for improvement. Then, we had multiple meetings with the developers to determine the best software options for this portal. We are reviewing several SAAS (Software as a Service) systems to determine if cloud software meets all requirements. Once this phase is completed, we will meet again with the individual school chairman to help develop the portal.



WEDDINGS ON MAGNOLIA

Last year, NGC started marketing weddings at headquarters. The 6.2 acres of ground create a fantastic location for a wedding. However, getting into the wedding business is not easy. Headquarters used their creative skills to develop a marketing process that includes social media marketing and in-person wedding expos. Although we are currently only allowing outdoor weddings, we've booked several weddings for the spring and summer of 2025. We look forward to adding more weddings in the future.



HAPPY GARDENER BIDS FAREWELL

Charlotte Swanson, our long-term TNG contributor with her column, *The Happy Gardener*, put away her keyboard and retired from writing for our magazine. Charlotte wrote her first article for *The National Gardener* in the winter 2016 issue. She states, "I appreciate the opportunity I have been given, the support I have felt, and the joy of writing on the topic I like the most!" Thank you, Charlotte, for your great stories, lessons taught, and beautiful images.



CORRECTION

The National Gardener staff apologizes for incorrectly spelling Pacific Region Director, Carol Norquist's name in the fall issue of *TNG*.



Mark Your Calendar

Winter Desk • Tatiana Svorodpva

President Brenda's Travels

- ❖ March 9: South Atlantic Region, Raleigh, NC
- ❖ March 24: Maryland Garden Clubs, Ellicott City, MD
- ❖ March 28: West Virginia Garden Clubs, Flatwoods, WV
- ❖ April 7: Louisiana Garden Clubs, Alexandria, LA
- ❖ April 8: Garden Clubs of Mississippi, Grenada, MS
- ❖ April 23: Garden Clubs of Missouri, Springfield, MO
- ❖ April 27: Arizona Garden Clubs, Tempe, AZ
- ❖ April 28: Pacific Region, Tempe, AZ
- ❖ April 30: Garden Clubs of Kentucky, Paducah, KY
- ❖ May 18 - 22: NGC Convention, North Charleston, SC
- ❖ June 17: Garden Club of Ohio, North Canton, OH

Looking for Events? Search the [NGC Calendar](#) for upcoming in-person and virtual events near you or across the globe.

Coming Soon, In-Person & Online

- ❖ January - April, 2025: [Environmental School](#)*
- ❖ January - October, 2025: [Flower Show School](#)*
- ❖ February - October, 2025: [Gardening School](#)*
- ❖ January - August, 2025: [Landscape Design School](#)*
- ❖ March - April, 2025: [Multiple Refreshers](#)
- ❖ April - October, 2025: [Symposiums](#)*
- ❖ [International Events](#)*

*Clicking on the above links takes you directly to the most up-to-date course listings and details on the website. Looking for a specific course? **Click on Course 1, 2, 3, or 4 or the month on the course listing chart.**

[Subscribe to TNG](#) to assure email notification of future NGC events including webinars.

NOTE: Throughout TNG click on ads to go directly to our advertisers' webpages and click on blue, underlined links to get more information, contact a committee chair or author.

NGC SCHOOLS REMINDER Pat Rupiper

It is still necessary to notify your state school chair PRIOR to attending any school so they may send your current form to the hosting school chair. **No form equals no credit.** There are also other forms to be sent to the regional chair by the state chair. Do master consultants wish to go emeritus? They must be in good standing and fill out a Form 8. If you go emeritus, you may still help your school by proctoring or performing other duties. (Only Emeritus Flower Show Judges are no longer able to judge.) Remember to send Form 14 as needed, at least yearly, so we can adjust our records. We have all seen the extension and reinstatement forms. Remember, you must be in good standing to receive an extension. For local chairs, Form 15 is a certificate you may complete and give to non-members upon completion of classes. Go to the [Schools Resources](#) webpage to familiarize yourself with all the forms available and each form's function.

All three schools have virtual and in-person courses this spring, with more to follow. Please avail yourself of the education available – the local/state hosts give a lot of time and effort for the classes offered. NGC Zoom Environmental School, Course 4 is March 4-5 focusing on Water and Related Issues. Thank you for supporting the schools. It is an honor to serve the members.

[Pat Rupiper](#), of Ohio, is the NGC Schools Policy Coordinator and Environmental School Chair.



Do not dwell in the past, do not dream of the future, concentrate the mind on the present moment. Buddha

*Creek - Bridgeport City Park, WV on
New Year's Day 2023. • Debi Eastep*

Sitting on the Porch

Gerianne Holzman, Editor

It is a bit too cold here in Wisconsin to sit on the porch and contemplate life, so I begin the new year indoors with the intent to be more “present.” Being present means more than physically being in a place. It is staying focused on a task at hand, genuinely listening to the person speaking to you, and keeping your mind engaged. How often are we at a presentation when our mind travels to tasks to complete later in the day, or what will we eat for dinner? We must remember that those speakers, lecturers, pastors, politicians, or whoever is speaking spent a LOT of their time getting ready to share what they know. They deserve to be listened to with our ears and our brains. Why are we there if we do not stay present in the moment? I recently read that multi-tasking is a myth. We think we can be doing many things simultaneously, but how well are we performing each undertaking? Might it not be more efficient to focus on one item, finish it, and move on to the next? Consider when we are at a garden club meeting, and a fellow member discusses a topic important to them. Listening to what they say is essential, even if that project, flower show, or other item does not interest us. Why? Because they deserve to be heard; their opinion matters just like everyone’s. Consider practicing being present; it is hard, but we can prevail. It might even give our brains a bit of a rest.

On behalf of *The National Gardener* staff and our entire team of NGC staff, copy editors, contributors, and advertisers, we thank you for your support and wish you a very happy new year. Thanks for reading!

Gerianne

Life gives you plenty of time to do whatever you want to do if you stay in the present moment.

Deepak Chopra

We appreciate all of the amazing stories, articles and images in this issue of The National Gardener. Send comments and suggestions for future issues to [Gerianne Holzman](#), editor. We encourage all NGC members to submit articles.



Back by Popular Demand

Membership Mondays Zoom Meetings

First Monday of each Month

Watch for more information and a Zoom link on the NGC Website, via an NGC Blast, or add your name to the [NGC Communications List](#), be the first to know.

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